

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: SAWING THE AIR THUS:
AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE
TRANSLATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE AND
THE ECHOES OF RHETORICAL GESTURE

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Directed By: Dr. Franklin J. Hildy, Department of Theatre

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) signed in 1990 states that “no individual may be discriminated against on the basis of disability.” The creation of anti-discrimination laws did not, however, legislate community understanding and equality of access. Focusing on access for the Deaf community to Shakespeare in performance, I am interested in developing both a theoretical and practical document.

This document will explore the seemingly disparate fields of Performance theory, Shakespeare studies, Sign language studies, and Deaf studies in order to formalize a structure for interpreting text to create a communal experience for both Deaf and Hearing audiences.

The virtuosity of Shakespeare makes his stories universal, enabling them to be translated into countless languages. Signed languages, as a part of the translation studies of Shakespeare, are often considered insignificant to the field because the

interpretation into ASL is as temporal as a performance or is perceived by some to be limited to a small community of understanding. By formalizing a process of translation that uses elements of both ASL and gesture, not only does this research provide a structure for creating formal ASL translations, but reexamines the importance of rhetorical gesture in Shakespeare studies.

I begin by providing an overview of my methodology and interdisciplinary approach to gesture, ASL, Shakespeare and performance theory. Next, I examine a historical and theoretical framework for gesture in both the D/deaf and performance communities. I go on to discuss the use of gesture (rhetorical, performance, and sign language) in production through an analysis of sketches, charts, and embedded video. Finally, I document my experiences as an interpreter in an original staging practices environment. This documentation illustrates the uses of the previously discussed elements converging in practice. This dissertation will serve as a first step towards practitioners, academics, and interpreters working together to fully interpret Shakespeare's texts and redefine the concept of access.

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By

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Foreword

Though I am not Deaf and cannot speak to that experience, I have been fortunate to be included as a part of the Deaf community since I was eight years old, as a friend, supporter, colleague and Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) certified interpreter.

Several years ago, when I was living in NYC, I had the idea to share one of my favorite activities with some of my Deaf friends. I asked them to join me to see an interpreted production of Shakespeare in the Park. I was surprised when their response was a resounding "Blech!" It seemed to me, that Shakespeare's text would be a perfect match with American Sign Language (ASL). Both languages contain poetic, visual, and visceral storytelling and I couldn't understand my friends' trepidation. Then I saw the play.

The production used four interpreters, one of whom was incredible and caught all the nuances, humor, pathos and poetry of the play; two were mediocre, missing several jokes and vital character information, and interfering with the integrity of the performance; the fourth interpreter was awful, providing little more than a basic summary.

My friends left the performance with the same sense of dissatisfaction they had arrived with. After some thought, I concluded that their response wasn't the fault of the interpreters. The problem was the lack of a system in place, a model of interpreting, when it came to this kind of text.

So I started to look for a way to create one.

The initial question of this research asks: What is the process of creating a linguistically accurate, contextually appropriate, and accessible interpretation of Shakespearean text into ASL? This question brings up issues of: access, context, interpretation/translation, and Shakespeare as both performance and text, which are discussed throughout this dissertation.

This kind of trans-disciplinary work created several challenges in both research and documentation. The use of American Sign Language as a research tool required an exploration of Deaf culture, as the language is a major factor in establishing Deaf identity. As it is not a written language, few primary documents of Deaf History exist and a different kind of research tactic was necessary. This kind of work required taking Deaf culture out of the footnotes and reestablishing its importance to a mainstream (Hearing) community. An important part of this process, then, was to present the discourses of Deaf Culture, theatre history and Shakespeare studies as equal, regardless of the amount of documentation available.

One way to limit the scope of Shakespeare studies was to focus on original staging practices (OSP). Original staging practices puts the theories of how Shakespeare's plays may have been staged in Shakespeare's lifetime into practice. I was particularly drawn to this theory, as it pertains to acting style, especially rhetorical gesture. Though most OSP theatres focus on non-acting elements (architecture of the space, costumes, lighting, etc.), I was interested in connecting the theories of gesture, as discussed in B.L. Joseph's *Elizabethan Acting*, and positing a connection between performing with gesture and performing in ASL. Both the

historical research and the plays in an OSP production have been documented in traditional printed resources (books, journals, reviews) as well as through multi-media documentation (video archives, websites, blogs, etc.). In order to discuss the ASL interpreting of Shakespeare, I needed to create both the historical research and ASL performance, as well as provide the documentation.

The challenge of documentation is reflected in both the form and content of this dissertation. The new and developing field of Deaf studies and the research associated with Deaf culture, is most often documented through video, websites, blogs, and vlogs. These technologies provide an immediate connection that has been embraced by the Deaf community as a primary means of communication. The dissertation's shift in documentation style is very clear as the discussion moves from performance history and Shakespeare (as documented in books and journals) to Deaf culture and interpreting research (as documented on websites and online databases).

There is currently no documentation of an interpreted performance in practice. This means there are few, if any, opportunities for interpreters to receive feedback on a particular performance or document the experience of a specific interpretive choice for others in the field to study. Also, there is no comprehensive survey or documentation of an American Deaf audience's experience or of how an interpreter in the space influences the actor/audience relationship. A vital part of this work, therefore, has been to include practical documentation for future students of ASL translation studies, disabilities studies, and as a part of the growing interest in gesture.

What may seem to some readers a fragmented presentation is an illustration of a lack of communication and the independent development of each field. My work

presents the fields, as they are considered currently, separate and unconnected, in order to highlight specific moments of intersection and interaction. One of the key moments of intersection in this work between such “disparate” fields as Shakespeare Studies and sign language interpreting is that of rhetorical gesture. This intersection permits interaction between the fields.

I would like this dissertation to be a first step in a cross-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary conversation. I hope it will benefit a variety of fields as the work continues to transform into practical DVD’s for actors and interpreters, Deaf culture and Theatre history publications, and ASL interpreted Shakespeare productions that incorporate rhetorical gesture.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the memory of my Opa,
Henry Peritz, who always spoke my language.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the members of my committee for their support of my work, Chair Dr. Franklin Hildy, Dr. Heather Nathans, Dr. Faedra Carpenter, Dr. Katie King, and visiting Professor Carole Lazorisak. Carole Lazorisak has been a supporter of this project since it was little more than a question I asked in her class many years ago. Teacher, colleague, and friend, she has given me a unique perspective of American Sign Language and the Deaf community. This work would not have begun without her.

I would also like to express my profound gratitude to the American Shakespeare Center and the casts of the 2006-2008 seasons. The ASC's Blackfriars Conferences have allowed me to present and discuss my work with some of the world's most celebrated Shakespeare scholars. Colleen Kelly's (and the education and research department) enthusiasm for accessible and inclusive work not only provided me an opportunity to put theory into practice but embraced the process of interpreting shows for both the local Deaf community and for the continued education of their actors. Colleen also provided me with a wealth of information and readings of Delsarte from her personal library. For this and her continued enthusiasm and support I am beyond grateful.

No dissertation is complete without the support and affection of good friends. Cory Ryan Frank filmed the video clips in Chapter Three. Not only are they integral to this work, but we managed to laugh through a large percentage of repetitive filming. I thank him. My cohorts and partners in crime: Chrystyna Dail, Kristin Messer, and Casey Kaleba provided me with the listening ears, strong shoulders, caffeine, alcohol, and laughter to survive this process. They are loved. No less appreciated are the friends that listen to theory and laugh at the jokes they may or may not understand and we thank them. Sarah Daniels, Chris Martin, the UMD administrative staff, and several of my undergraduate students from UMD are members of this category.

No dissertation is possible without family. My mother and Oma, Leslie and Martha Peritz provided me with daily support, good food, clean laundry and more. My mother read early drafts, sorted out miscellaneous commas, bought me shoes, and took me for long walks. My brother, Jeremy Snyder, taught me the "Grrrr face" and how to channel emotion into work. Each uniquely contributed to this work and helped me become who I am.

This dissertation would not have been completed without the continued support of Paul Reisman. Footnote genius, video embedding superhero, best friend, partner, and all-around amazing human being.

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Chapter One: Introductions

*Nor do not saw the air
too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently;
for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say,
the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget
a temperance that may give it smoothness.*

--Hamlet, act 3, scene 2

*scripta manent - verba volant = Written words remain/Spoken words fly
(vanish)*

--The Interpreter's Maxim

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 states that “no individual may be discriminated against on the basis of disability.” With this profound and historic shift in anti-discrimination policy, the ADA legally recognized "disability" as a minority subculture. This new status compelled businesses to consider reasonable accommodation and equal access to goods and services for all. The theatre community met this requirement by, among other things, widening aisles, creating spaces for wheelchairs in their auditoriums, adding handrails to bathroom stalls, and providing large-print programs, audio descriptions, open captions, and American Sign Language Interpreters.

The creation of anti-discrimination laws did not, however, legislate community understanding and equality of access. Businesses and public facilities could focus on meeting the minimum requirements (in order to spend minimal funds) with no concern for the broader implications of access.¹ Theatre owners could provide ASL

1. For more information on how ADA regulations were implemented and the reaction from the disabled community, see Sharon Barnartt and Richard Scotch,

interpreters without considering the quality of the interpretations. With no interest in or formal means to evaluate the interpretations, ADA access did not guarantee equality of experience. Equal access requires approaching a performance from a non-hierarchical discourse.

The primary question of this research focuses specifically on the Deaf community. What is the process of creating the most linguistically accurate, contextually appropriate, and accessible interpretation of Shakespearean text in ASL? As a theatre practitioner and a certified ASL interpreter, with ties to both communities for over fifteen years, I am particularly interested in developing both a theoretical and practical document which explores what access to Shakespeare in performance truly means for Deaf audiences.

Defining the Terms of Study

A definitive study of the translation process of Shakespeare into American Sign Language (ASL) has yet to be published. This dissertation, therefore, is intended to provide a foundation of history and methodology in order to support continued work across the fields of Performance theory, Shakespeare studies, and Deaf studies. In order to create a document that is accessible to scholars, practitioners, and interpreters, I structure a methodology of history/theory/practice in the following ways:

Disability Protests: Contentious Politics 1970-1999 (Washington, DC: Gallaudet Press, 2001).

- Establishing the historical foundation by observing the moments of intersection of Deaf culture and performance (rhetorical) gesture.

Deaf History and Shakespeare in Performance have been studied as entirely separate disciplines. There is little to no documentation on the overlap between performance gesture/rhetorical gesture and sign languages. Any research on the interpreting process must begin with the awareness that these two fields have overlapped for some time and an investigation of their influence.

- Explaining the specific process of integrating gesture and performance when interpreting Shakespeare into ASL.

Once the scope of the historical context has been established, the next step is recognizing how gesture and sign language have been codified and how this informs the process of translating. Overlapping gesture and sign language in interpreting Shakespeare helps to illuminate the more complex rhetorical devices for Deaf audiences. Documenting the process provides a structure for future interpretations.

- Describing the practicalities of an interpreter and a Deaf audience in an original staging practices space.

The process of interpreting, at this point, is theoretical. In order to prove this process is successful, an experiential element is required. An original staging practices space is ideal in this case, because of the interest of actor/audience relationship, architecture of space and architecture of text. Examples of such an experience are presented through my work interpreting for the American Shakespeare Center, an original staging practices company.

In order for the seemingly disparate fields of Performance theory, Shakespeare studies, and Deaf studies to converge within this methodology, they must not only intersect but interact. Several key terms necessary in understanding access to Shakespeare in performance are: Deaf culture, translation/interpretation, and original staging practices.

Deaf Culture in Performance

The D/deaf community has long fought against the labels of “handicap” and “disability” and fought for an understanding of the Deaf culture by the general community. In 1972, a sociolinguist named James Woodward proposed that the word “deaf” be used when referring to the audiological or medical condition of not hearing, and the word “Deaf” be used when referring to the individual or group of people who share in the common identity, language, and culture.² Defining culture as, “the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon man's

2. Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1988), 2.

capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations,” ASL has become vital to the Deaf community as a method of passing on cultural knowledge, beliefs, and behavior to its members.³

Deaf people are, by necessity, a “talking” people; they require face-to-face communication. Passing down stories within the community is a kind of orature (oral literature) that has no written equivalent.⁴ Unlike the linear presentation of traditional orature or a written work, an ASL story’s presentation is cinematic. For the storyteller, “the ASL narrative emphasizes not [only] the content of the story but its delivery, that is, a ‘procedural aesthetics.’”⁵ This story-telling tradition began in Deaf clubs, places for weekly meetings and gatherings with a time set aside for poetry and storytelling. Eventually these gatherings began to incorporate skits and dramatic scenes, allowing for a kind of theatre performance for a Deaf audience.⁶

In the late 1950s, performances in Deaf clubs blossomed into three amateur Deaf theatre groups: the Metropolitan Theatre Guild of the Deaf, the NY Hebrew Association of the Deaf, and the NY Theatre Guild of the Deaf. None of these groups produced full-length productions, and rarely performed for non-signing audiences.⁷

3. *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v. “Culture.”

4. Cynthia L. Peters, *Deaf American Literature: From the Carnival to the Canon*, (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2000), 4.

5. *Ibid.*, 54.

6. *Ibid.*, 45.

7. Stephen C. Baldwin, *Pictures in the Air*, (Washington DC: Gallaudet UP, 1993), 5.

The grassroots movement of these Deaf theatre groups, however, set the stage for what would become the first professional Deaf theatre company.

National Theatre of the Deaf

In 1959, *The Miracle Worker* by William Gibson opened on Broadway. The play dramatizes the first meeting and relationship between Helen Keller and her teacher, Annie Sullivan. “Although *The Miracle Worker* was not the first play with a deaf character, it was the first that used sign language as an expressive medium.”⁸ In order to learn American Sign Language for the role, Anne Bancroft, the actress playing Annie, worked with Dr. Edna S. Levine, a psychologist who worked with the Deaf, and Martin L. A. Sternberg, a sign language tutor. Bancroft’s work on the production not only inspired her, but director Arthur Penn, to become advocates for the Deaf community.

Anne became very enamored of the possibility of using the theatre and signing simultaneously with speaking actors as a new form. She thought of this because the very year that she became absorbed in the problems of the deaf, she saw *Othello* done at Gallaudet and also Kabuki dancers from Japan, and these two things inspired her and Arthur Penn. Arthur Penn saw this as a way to crack the federal government’s interest in putting money into the arts.⁹

Although their initial grant applications were unsuccessful, their interest in creating a professional Deaf theatre company caught the imagination of set designer David Hayes. “Hayes had no way of knowing how profoundly Bancroft’s little project

8. Ibid, 9.

9. George McClendon, “The Unique Contribution of the National Theatre of the Deaf to the American Theatre,” (master’s thesis, Catholic University, 1972), 8.

would affect his life and his career—he was destined to become NTD’s Founding Artistic Director...¹⁰

In 1967, the formation of the National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD), was officially announced. Their mission remains the same today:

To produce theatrically challenging work of the highest quality, drawing from as wide a range of the world’s literature as possible; to perform these original works in a style that links American Sign Language with the spoken word; to seek, train and employ Deaf artists; to offer our work to as culturally diverse and inclusive an audience as possible; to provide community outreach activities that will educate and enlighten the general public, opening their eyes and ears to Deaf culture and building linkages that facilitate involvement in our methods of work. To produce theatrically challenging work of the highest quality, drawing from as wide a range of the world’s literature as possible; to perform these original works in a style that links American Sign Language with the spoken word; to seek, train and employ Deaf artists; to offer our work to as culturally diverse and inclusive an audience as possible; to provide community outreach activities that will educate and enlighten the general public, opening their eyes and ears to Deaf culture and building linkages that facilitate involvement in our methods of work.¹¹

The social activism inherent in NTD’s mission also generated awareness in mainstream theatres, which began to offer access programs and even occasionally cast Deaf actors in their stage productions.¹² In documenting it’s history, Stephen Baldwin notes:

10. Baldwin, 8.

11. National Theatre of the Deaf, “About NTD,” National Theatre of the Deaf, <http://www.ntd.org/aboutntd.html> (accessed December 12, 2006)

12. Access to theatre for the Deaf community often refers to where ASL interpreters are positioned - in a corner of the stage or through an open-captioning system. Rarely are interpreters integrated into the action of the play. The act of access and interpreting theatre, however, is a different reception issue than that on which this dissertation is focused.

Although there has been no controlled study to measure the impact of NTD on the betterment of life for deaf people...Professor and author Alan B. Crammatte rates NTD as one of the major factors in expanding the work opportunities for deaf professionals in America.¹³

NTD was the catalyst for over twenty sign language based companies, two of which are still in existence; the Cleveland SignStage Theatre and, thanks to its Broadway and touring success with the musical *Big River*, the world-renowned DeafWest Theatre.¹⁴

Not only did Deaf artists start their own companies, but Deaf actors also found opportunities to perform in mainstream theatre.

In 1979, Mark Medoff penned the most famous story about deafness to date—*Children of a Lesser God*...written as a tribute to Phyllis Frelich, a former NTD player. Frelich was propelled into the national spotlight with her remarkable portrayal of Sarah. The play...moved to New York where it won three Tony awards for best play, best actress (Frelich), and best actor (John Rubenstein). *Children of a Lesser God* hired former NTD players, stage managers, and understudies as well. ...Ten years later, the movie version of *Children of a Lesser God* was to be a showcase for another deaf actress, Marlee Matlin...the first deaf person to win [an Academy Award]. ...Indeed, deaf actors and actresses in America were finally gaining the respect they deserved.¹⁵

As more productions accommodated Deaf performers, directors began to see the potential to learn from a physical approach to text. Michael Kahn, Artistic Director of The Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, D.C., states:

13. Baldwin, 115.

14. DeafWest Theatre in Los Angeles, California was founded by NTD members, Linda Bove, Ed Waterstreet and Phyllis Frelich. Further information available at <http://www.deafwest.com>.

15. Baldwin, 52-53.

For me, the reason to cast a Deaf actor is to illuminate a relationship or a play. Whether Deaf or hearing, when I have a good artistic experience working with an actor, I tend to think of that actor again for future projects. In the productions in which I have cast actors who are Deaf, they were wonderful experiences and through their performances, they illuminated the play.¹⁶

In 1994, Kahn offered the role of Katrin, a non-speaking but pivotal role in *Mother Courage and her Children* to Deaf actress Mary Vreeland, creating both a dramatic opportunity with the character and a professional opportunity for an actress.¹⁷ In 1999, he extended a similar opportunity to Deaf actress Monique Holt to play the character of Cordelia in *King Lear*. Cordelia's communication issues with Lear in Shakespeare's line "Love and be silent" took on a deeper meaning when she visually stated her inability to communicate with her father. The "voice" of Cordelia was provided by Floyd King as The Fool, a suitable match according to Kahn as,

[I]n Shakespeare's time, the characters of Cordelia and The Fool were played by the same person. It made sense for The Fool to speak Cordelia's lines as Cordelia signed. We also wanted to establish that the character of Cordelia was the child of a much later marriage, and that The Fool and Cordelia had a closer relationship. Therefore, in our production, The Fool was the only other character who signed fluently. Their relationship also helped to explain why The Fool was so upset for Cordelia in the course of the play.¹⁸

The King of France creates a relationship with Cordelia by learning her language, signing clearly by the end of the play and at times providing her "voice."

16. Listening with an Open Eye, "Why should I hire a Deaf or hard of hearing actor?" Alliance for Inclusion in the Arts, <http://www.inclusioninthearts.org/openEye/openeyeframe.htm> (accessed January 15, 2009).

17. She later won a Helen Hayes award for her portrayal.

18. Listening with an Open Eye, "Executing a Production" Alliance for Inclusion in the Arts, <http://www.inclusioninthearts.org/openEye/executing.html> (accessed January 15, 2009).

Cordelia's resolution with her father is created by his acknowledging and incorporating of a few signs at the end of the play and Cordelia's voicing of a single line, "I am."¹⁹ In this production for a Hearing audience, the interpretation and integration of deafness was successful. The "other-ness" of Cordelia and her ties to The Fool heightened the tragedy and created visual relationships that were incorporated into the acting and overall concept.

The play was not accessible to a Deaf audience in the same way. The disabling of Cordelia in this production was more about the symbol of silence than an opportunity to mediate between Deaf and Hearing cultures. Holt commented on the troubles of an illogical kingdom saying,

King Lear is not a Deaf production. Therein lies the problem: why would Cordelia sign if there were no one else to sign to? (A lot of directors, producers, and writers have done this.) In real life, I would not sign to a non-signer.²⁰

The use of disability as a symbol has been present dramatically since the Greeks (i.e., the blind all-seeing oracle), but objectifying the character of Cordelia to heighten Lear's tragedy seems to diminish the work both of Shakespeare and of the actress.

19. Harry Teplitz, comment on "Mute Cordelia in Washington," Shaksper: The Global Electronic Shakespeare Conference, comment posted October 16, 1999, <http://www.shaksper.net/archives/1999/1680.html> (accessed 30 April 2008).

20. Jessica Bernson, *Performing Deaf Identity: Bodies in Commotion*, ed. Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 46.

This is not to say the role was acted badly. In fact, Holt's performance was praised in several theatre reviews.²¹ In addition to her performance, Holt had several other responsibilities: translating the lines into ASL, creating a back story with Kahn and Assistant director P.J. Paperelli to justify her place in the Kingdom, and teaming with Floyd King to create a system of visual cues for the production. The translation work led to Holt's interest in the ASL Shakespeare project, which she joined as an actress/sign master in 2000 and performed in the project's productions of *Twelfth Night* presented at the Amaryllis Theatre in 2001, and when the adapted production of *Women in Shakespeare: Letters, Rings, and Things* was presented at The Painted Bride Arts Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania the same year.

As asserted in the introduction, the focus of this dissertation is the process and product of ASL interpretation. It does not intend to provide an analysis of Deaf culture *in* Theatre nor of Deaf representation *by* theatre. Nor will I discuss a Deaf audience response, as there are no foundational publications that address the American Deaf audience's experience in a mainstream theatre. There are a few privately published articles distributed by Sign Performances in Theatre (SPIT), a British organization, which focus on ways for theatres to incorporate Deaf audiences, the history of British Sign Language interpreters in theatre, and an assessment of British Deaf theatre attendees.²² However, the British Deaf theatre experience differs from an American one both linguistically (British Sign Language is a unique

21. Ibid., 48.

22. Signed Performances in Theatre, "Publications," SPIT, <http://www.spit.org.uk/Publications.asp> (accessed April 1, 2009).

language) and culturally. The interpreting process has some commonalities that are discussed later in this chapter.

Translation/Interpretation

In the previous section I focused on ASL's connection to Deaf representation on stage, as an important part of cultural identity. This section focuses on the interpreting process and aspects of linguistics and meta-linguistics. When working with ASL, it is important to clarify the differences between translation and interpretation. According to linguist Daniel Gile, "The most obvious of these arise from the fact that translators deal with written language and have time to polish their work, while interpreters deal with oral language and have no time to refine their output."²³ As ASL is not a spoken or written language, the defining of terms requires differentiating process and product. For the purposes of this dissertation, translation will refer to the documentation of a source language to a target language (i.e. Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* text available in ASL on CD ROM or DVD). Interpretation will refer to the process of transmitting the source language to the target language (i.e. Simultaneous interpretation of *Twelfth Night* in performance).

The first requirement in the process of translating a dramatic text is an understanding of the fundamentals of interpreting from English to ASL. The structure of any translation builds upon the awareness of evanescence, equivalences,

23. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, s.v. "Conference and Simultaneous Interpreting."

cultural mediation, and target and source languages.²⁴ The linguistic knowledge of both the target and source languages is especially important when translating English into ASL because the interpreter is changing the language mode from spoken to visual and must consider these varying linguistic parameters as s/he is formulating an appropriate translation. Accurate interpretation includes not only the message, but other nuances of communication as well. Current interpreter models “believe that interpreters should explain the cultural implications of an utterance when this is deemed essential to its understanding, and hence should practice cultural mediation.”²⁵ In theatrical interpretation, cultural mediation between a hearing theatre performance and a Deaf audience involves providing an interpretation for information based on sound (i.e. a church bell rings, indicating the time of day), historical references (i.e. a common Latin phrase), and overlapping sign systems (i.e. how costume affects a character’s movement). Cultural mediation is contextual based on a single performance and its audience.

Linguistics

The art of theatrical interpreting is the ability to use effectively all three versions of equivalence in order to provide an appropriate dramatic translation. A translation’s three basic kinds of equivalence are:

24. Danica Seleskovich, *Interpreting for International Conferences* (Silver Spring, MD: Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 1975), 1.

25. David A. Stewart, Jerome D. Schein, and Brenda E. Cartwright, *Sign Language Interpreting: Exploring its Art and Science* (MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 134.

Etymological translation, which translates primary meaning of the words as given in the dictionary;

Conventional translation, which supplies set terms for words used in a given field; and

Contextual translation, which is the creative restatement of an idea using semantic equivalents that are valid only in a given context.²⁶

The ability to use the form of the text to aid in translation begins with an understanding of the fundamental linguistic qualities of ASL as compared to English. Specifically, in English, phonetics and phonology are kinesthetic, using the lips, tongue, teeth and soft/hard palates. ASL, in comparison, embeds the semantics of a word or phrase in the phonology by using the parameters in the formation of signs, by using hand-shape, location of the sign, movement pattern, and palm orientation.²⁷

The tone of a thought, theatrically speaking - the “subtext”, is in the vocal inflection not in the technical formation of the word. As for ASL, the tone/subtext is in the energy and emphasis (movement) of a sign that the interpreter incorporates with the four parameters, the “cherology” of ASL, to enable her to analyze aspects of the dramatic form (rhythm, rhyme, and meter).²⁸

Clayton Valli, Assistant Professor of Interpreting at Gallaudet University, analyzed ASL poetry performed by renowned Deaf poets Bernard Bragg, Ella Mae

26. Seleskovich, 79.

27. Here, the term “signs” is used as an equivalent for the English term “words” when referring to ASL. When discussing ASL in a written format, an English gloss is used as a written marker for an ASL sign (i.e., DOG = the ASL sign for dog).

28. William Stokoe coined the term “Cherology” as a parallel to phonology, chero=hand. For a further discussion of this, see R. Battison, *Lexical Borrowing in American Sign Language*, (MD: Linstock Press, 1978), 19.

Lentz, and Peter Cook, in order to document the formal structure of ASL and compare it to English poetic structure.²⁹ He theorized that ASL has more possibility for rhyme than English and actually incorporates the same sense of rhythm and meter.³⁰ In English, there are two basic types of rhyme: assonance (repetition of a vowel) and alliteration (repetition of a consonant). ASL has four types of rhyme: contour path rhyme (repetition of movement path), hand-shape rhyme (repetition of hand-shape), location rhyme (placement of sign in a particular location repeated), and non-manual sign rhyme (eyebrows, head/mouth movement repeated). Rhythm in ASL is the motion of poetry itself. The meter, which differs by being more specific about counting and use of rhythm, is illustrated in ASL by the hold/movement segments in a sequence that parallel syllables in English. All of these features aid in the understanding of the nature of a line, not only in exploring form, but in distinguishing poetry and prose. As Valli concludes, “Thus the function of rhyme in marking line divisions make it clear that it is poetry rather than prose, which does not display this kind of phenomenon. It begins to look very much like verse, which rhymes at the end of lines.”³¹

29. Bragg, Lentz and Cook have all “published” their poetry on DVD and continue to perform live, but defer to Valli’s analysis of ASL poetic structure.

30. Clayton Valli, “Poetics of American Sign Language Poetry” (PhD diss., Union Institute, 1993), 27-41.

31. Clayton Valli, “Nature of the Line in ASL Poetry” in William Edmondson and Fred Karlsson (Ed.). *SLR ’87 : papers from the Fourth International Symposium on Sign Language Research*, Lappeenranta, Finland July 15-19, 1987 Hamburg: Signum-Press, 1990. p.171-182

Applying these poetic devices to theatrical interpretation is a part of any interpreter's process. In order to create equivalent textual access, however, I claim that the incorporation of appropriate performance gesture is vital to a successful translation. The incorporation of appropriate gesture connects rhetorical gesture and ASL to the unique experience of an interpreter in an original staging practices environment. In order to analyze what this process entails, a closer look at how original staging practices is defined and practiced is necessary.

Original Staging Practices

In recent years the term 'original practices' has been invoked not only in London's Bankside Globe but also in several theatrical venues in North America – most notably by the American Shakespeare Company in Staunton, Virginia, and the Atlanta Tavern Theatre in Atlanta, Georgia. The on-stage practices linked to the term, however, can vary widely, for few common denominators can be found among practitioners.³²

Original Practices encompasses the construction (or reconstruction) of Elizabethan style stages/theatres, costuming in Elizabethan dress, direct audience contact through daylight or fully lighted performances, and Elizabethan acting/rehearsal techniques. The term was developed in the early years of the Bankside Globe "coined for this work in 2002 although, in hindsight, some productions staged between 1997 and 2000 have had this phrase attached to them as well."³³ Other companies' explorations of Elizabethan staging have used terms such

32. Alan C. Dessen, "'Original Practices' At the Globe: a theatre historian's view," in *Shakespeare's Globe: A Theatrical Experiment*, eds. Christie Carson and Farah Karim-Cooper (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 45.

as “Elizabethan Revival,” “Renaissance staging” and “authentic” productions. “Mark Rylance, Claire van Kampen, and Jenny Tiramani saw the difficulties posed by word ‘authentic’ and subsequently referred to their work as original practices.”³⁴ Though OP is not a standard practice at the Globe, the productions must always take into account the effect of the architectural space on the text in performance. The relationship between the poetic structure of the text and the architectural structure of where the text is performed has been of interest since at least 1897. “There are fewer than six degrees of separation between the opening of Shakespeare’s Globe in 1997, and the events of 1897 when William Poel... made the first known drawings of what the Globe theatre may have looked like...”³⁵

William Poel’s Elizabethan Revival began in 1881 with a production of *Hamlet* based on the newly published facsimiles of the first and second quartos. Poel was an advocate of the text-based production, believing that “[I]f an actor wishes to interpret the play intelligently, he must shut his eyes to all that has taken place on the stage since the poet’s time, turning to Shakespeare’s text and trusting to that alone for inspiration.”³⁶ He would study all the editions of a script and the Elizabethan Stage Society would read through the entire script before any single line cuts could be

33. Jenny Tiramani, “Exploring early modern stage and costume design,” in Carson and Karim-Cooper, 57.

34. Farah Karim-Cooper, “Cosmetics on the Globe stage,” in Carson and Karim-Cooper, 75.

35. Franklin J. Hildy, “The ‘essense of Globeness’: authenticity, and the search for Shakespeare’s stagecraft,” in Carson and Karim-Cooper, 15.

36. William Poel, *Shakespeare in the Theatre* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1913), 60.

made.³⁷ In addition, the structure of the script was to be complimented by the structure of the stage.

Poel searched for the original experience of the drama, both for actor and audience. In his production of *Hamlet*, he designed an open space with minimal scenery, but “[t]he DeWitt drawing of the Swan was, of course, not yet known, and Poel worked with curtains.”³⁸ In later experimental productions, he based his construction of the platform and stage on his research into The Fortune Theatre.³⁹ The openness of the set highlighted what Poel claimed was the musicality of creating an orchestra with the text, “cast[ing] his plays with each character in mind as the double-bass, cello, wood-wind and the like.”⁴⁰ He believed that the show should be presented without interval. He also valued the word over the action and often felt that the poetic language should be performed in such a way (following music) that the important or key thoughts were highlighted. Poel’s techniques were not, however, without problems.

Though Poel clearly stated his objections to cutting whole scenes by remaining loyal to the text, he was known to have a liberal pen when it suited him. As Robert Speight, his biographer claims, “when the text was concerned, he

37. Claris Glick, “William Poel: His Theories and Influences,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15 (Winter 1964): 17.

38. J.L. Styan, *Elizabethan Open Staging William Poel to Tyrone Guthrie*, ed. Allardyce Nicoll, “Shakespeare Survey Volume 12: Elizabethan Theatre” (Cambridge University Press, 1959), 214.

39. Claris Glick, 19.

40. *Ibid.*, 18.

surrendered on every count to the Puritanism still in vogue.”⁴¹ Spreight defines Poel’s Puritanism based on the fact that Poel often left behind Shakespeare’s bawdier humor, regardless of its effect on the plot. For example, in his production of *Measure for Measure*, Poel cut out all of the references to Julietta’s “being with child.” Other cuts to the text are noted, less for piety and more for clarity of plot, in several of Poel’s promptbooks. Though Poel’s productions were much closer to Shakespeare’s text than other productions of the period, “they appeared radical.”⁴²

Just because Poel's work with the Elizabethan Stage Society is considered historically significant by our current OP standards, does not mean that the shows were necessarily successful. Specifically his “preoccup[ation] with a characteristically eccentric system called ‘tones’ which marred many of his own productions.”⁴³ Shaw, however, particularly noted Poel’s contribution to the field as an innovator,⁴⁴ and the influence of style, along with Shaw's approval, created a momentum of interest in authentic Elizabethan staging practices.

Poel’s work was documented and carried on by those who worked with him. Harley Granville-Barker’s *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, based on Poel’s work, influenced

41. Ibid., 17.

42. Ibid.

43. Franklin J. Hildy, “Why Elizabethan Spaces?” in *Elizabethan Performance in North American Spaces: Theatre Symposium 12*, ed. Susan Kattwinkel (Tuscaloosa, AL: Southeastern Theatre Conference and the University of Alabama Press, 2004), 105.

44. George Bernard Shaw showed his appreciation for Poel’s work when he noted that “Mr. Poel has achieved artistic originality, beauty, and novelty of effect, as well as the fullest attainable measure of historical conviction.” As discussed in Styan, 215.

an entire generation of performers and directors (such as John Gielgud, Peter Brook, and Tyrone Guthrie, to name a few...). In an interview titled “How to Use Shakespeare,” Grandville-Baker noted that each director referred to “Elizabethan values,” including actor/audience relationship, simple set, and continuity of performance.⁴⁵ Sir Lewis Casson, another disciple of Poel, documented the essential components of production:

1. The full text in its proper order without interpolations or rearrangement.
2. Continuity of speech from scene to scene without breaks between acts
3. A permanent architectural set with at least two level, and an inner stage covered by traverse curtains
4. A wide platform stage projecting into the audience
5. Elizabethan dress (with a few period modifications)
6. Rapid, highly coloured, musical speech of great rang and flexibility.⁴⁶

Poel’s work planted the seed that would create a new point of access for historians and collectors as well as practitioners. The drawing Poel created of a full Elizabethan playhouse in 1897 was built in 1912 “as a part of the ‘Shakespeare’s England’ exhibition in Earl’s Court.”⁴⁷ Interest in Elizabethan practices reached across the ocean to the Americas as well. In 1885, Harvard University built an Elizabethan stage in the Sanders Theatre. The stage was reconstructed in 1904 for George Pierce Baker’s production of *Hamlet*.⁴⁸ In 1928, Henry and Emily Folger

45. Glick, 23.

46. Sir Lewis Casson, “William Poel and the Modern Theatre,” *The Listener*, (Jan. 10, 1952), 56, quoted in Hildy, “Why Elizabethan Spaces?” 104-105.

47. Hildy, “Why Elizabethan Spaces?” 106

began construction on the Folger Library, which housed their collections of Shakespeare archives, and was completed in 1932.⁴⁹ In addition to housing their extensive Shakespeare collection they wanted to acknowledge the importance of Shakespeare in performance by constructing a recreation of an indoor Elizabethan stage. While only originally designed as an exhibit, their Elizabethan Theatre was the first permanent reconstruction in the world.⁵⁰

In 1935, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival began with WPA funds to build an “Elizabethan Stage.”⁵¹ In 1947, the stage was rebuilt due to a fire (a strange echo of the Elizabethan theatres), and a new stage was constructed which “does not attempt to restore in any specific detail any specific Elizabethan Theatre. But wherever specific measurements have been mentioned in the Henslowe-Alleyn contract with Peter Street for the construction of *The Fortune*, those measurements have been followed.”⁵² Original practices scholarship and production would have international notice when Sam Wanamaker, an American actor seeking refuge in England during the early 1950’s, went on a search for the site of the original Globe Theatre. Because he felt that the small plaque on a brewery wall was insufficient to commemorate

48. Ibid.

49. Folger Shakespeare Library, “History of the Institute,” Folger Shakespeare Library, <http://www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=997> (accessed April 30, 2006).

50. It wasn't until 1970 that the Folger Theatre Group was formed using the stage for live performances.

51. James Sandoe, “The Oregon Shakespeare Festival,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 1 (Jan. 1950): 4.

52. Ibid., 6.

Shakespeare's theatre, he set out to create an authentic venue for Shakespeare's texts to be performed, which would also be a place of learning.⁵³ He felt that the remounted Globe would be an important part of theatrical history, and further, a point of exploration for performance to bring together architecture, audience and text.

The original Globe in London was built in 1599 as a home for the Lord Chamberlain's Men and the works of William Shakespeare. It is no surprise that Bernard Beckerman saw the Globe as more than a performance space.

[F]or us the playhouse signifies more than a physical structure for the presentation of plays. It has become the symbol of an entire art. Its construction initiated a glorious decade during which the company achieved a level of stability and a quality of productivity rarely matched in the history of the theater. So rich was the achievement that virtually all interest in the Elizabethan drama radiates from the work of these years. ...It was a theater built by actors for actors.⁵⁴

Wanamaker's dream became a reality in 1997 when the New Globe was officially opened to the public. The long process of (re)creating the Globe was not easy because it involved financing, local politics and historical debate. Archeological evidence was analyzed and architectural practicalities were dealt with over this long period of time. When opening day finally arrived, the Globe opened as a theatre space that simultaneously created an Education Center and Exhibition, as expressed in the mission statement:

53. Shakespeare's Globe, "Sam Wanamaker," Shakespeare's Globe, <http://www.shakespeares-globe.org/information/abouttheglobe/samwanamaker/> (accessed April 30, 2006).

54. Bernard Beckerman, *Shakespeare at the Globe, 1599-1609*, (New York: Macmillan, 1962), ix.

Shakespeare's Globe is a unique international resource dedicated to the exploration of Shakespeare's work, and the playhouse for which he wrote, through the connected means of education and performance.⁵⁵

Hence, the exploration of Shakespeare's performance through "original practices" is not limited to assessing the theatre space itself, but includes Elizabethan costuming, fully lit performances, all male casts,⁵⁶ and a recent interest in "original pronunciation."⁵⁷

The experimentation of the Globe space began in the 1995 workshop season. Observations of rehearsal, performance, and the effects of the architecture on the performers and audience were documented by Pauline Kiernan.⁵⁸ Though the term "original practices" was not regularly used until 2002 (as previously discussed) the workshop season was experimenting with Elizabethan costumes and exploring the effect of architecture. Mark Rylance, as artistic director, "considered two streams of work to be valid experiments, 'original practices' and also 'free-hand' work."⁵⁹ Free-

55. Shakespeare's Globe, "About the Globe," Shakespeare's Globe, <http://www.shakespeares-globe.org/information/abouttheglobe/> (accessed May 5, 2006)

56. The Globe also occasionally presents all female casts, whether this equates with the all male casts of the Elizabethan period is questionable. Although an argument can be made in favor of it, being analogous to the occasion when the men cast in roles as women are not the boy-actors of Shakespeare's day, but adult male professional actors.

57. For further information, see: David Crystal, *Pronouncing Shakespeare: The Globe Experiment*, (Cambridge University Press), 2005.

58. Pauline Kiernan, *Staging Shakespeare at the New Globe*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc.), 1999.

59. Mark Rylance, "Research, materials, craft: principles of performance at Shakespeare's Globe," in Carson and Karim-Cooper, 105.

hand work allowed for directors to use modern sensibility and theatrical trends in the Globe space. Rylance, in approaching ways to explore Shakespeare's texts, focused on the theatre space itself "as the primary resource, an instrument to be tested."⁶⁰

In 2002, The Globe presented a production of *Twelfth Night* as an original practices performance.

Possibly the most productive experiment to take place in terms of the discoveries of 'original practices' was the movement of *Twelfth Night* from Middle Temple Hall to the Globe Theatre. This comparative approach allowed for a re-examination of the findings of the experiments that were based in only one of these spaces.⁶¹

The costumes followed the Elizabethan style and construction and the cast was all-male, including former Artistic director Mark Rylance as Olivia. Like William Poel, The Globe cast and Master of the Play (a.k.a. director) Tim Carroll first took *Twelfth Night* to Middle Temple Hall. The result was a very long narrow acting space with the audience on three sides with the actors emerging from both ends of the hall.⁶² The performance did incorporate furniture and props, and the costuming in particular was an important detail in characterization. According to Lois Potter,

[T]he all-male cast was clearly committed to the gestures and movement required by their late Elizabethan dress. The women's hands-on-hips poses accentuated the smallness of their waists.... As Olivia, Mark Rylance was particularly good at the 'swimming' walk that Elizabethan ladies were urged to acquire.⁶³

60. Carson and Karim-Cooper, 179.

61. Ibid., 9-10.

62. Lois Potter, "Showing Some Respect," review of *Twelfth Night*, by William Shakespeare, Globe Theatre production, Middle Temple, London, *Around the Globe* 21, (Summer 2002): 3.

63. Ibid.

Potter also mentions that Rylance seemed to give the most “detailed (and thus modern) performance.”⁶⁴ The idea of Rylance giving a “modern” performance in full Elizabethan female costuming in a traditional Elizabethan space supposes that modern acting methodology is inherent in the performance.

Despite the Elizabethan trappings of the production, the rehearsal process of *Twelfth Night* was distinctly modern. The Tudor Group, an organization dedicated to reenacting Tudor life, was invited to the rehearsal process to work with the actors on Elizabethan movement and etiquette. The actors, in order to present original practices, used modern research to learn original practices. The problem is, though they defined someone as Master of Play, using a distinct Elizabethan term, his role was that of director which is not part of the Elizabethan process. The production was distinctly shaped by 20th century psychological acting techniques. So underneath the sign system of Elizabethan performance there was a core of 20th century realism.⁶⁵

One method of original practices in rehearsal began in the early 1980’s with Patrick Tucker’s belief that “the first Folio version always plays better. Not sometimes, not almost, but *always* [his emphasis] performs better.”⁶⁶ The Riverside

64. Ibid.

65. Jessica Ryan, “Twelfth Night in Rehearsal,” *Research Issue* 26 (July 2002), under “Shakespeare’s Globe,” http://www.globelink.org/docs/Twelfth_Night.pdf (accessed April 29, 2006).

66. Patrick Tucker, *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 226.

Shakespeare Company, influenced by the teachings of Tucker, used the First Folio texts in production. Tucker (with Christine Ozanne), then co-founded the Original Shakespeare Company (OSC) in London, which relied on Cue scripts “with the preparation restricted to one-on-one verse sessions and a simple full company meeting to settle entrances and exits.”⁶⁷ With the construction of the New Bankside Globe, the OSC developed a working relationship with the space “...its annual productions in the Shakespeare’s Globe ‘experimental’ Monday night slots, in 1997, 1998, and 1999.”⁶⁸ The Globe, running two companies simultaneously to create a full summer season, focused on elements of space, costume, and makeup. The OSC’s performances “were attempts to focus the three lenses of space, preparatory practice, and use of textual material, in such a way to gain an enhanced view on Shakespeare’s plays in performance.”⁶⁹

Original practices in rehearsal in a reconstructed Elizabethan space are continuing at the American Shakespeare Center (ASC). Formerly Shenandoah Shakespeare, ASC, led by Ralph Alan Cohen and Jim Warren, not only (re)created the Blackfriars Playhouse, Shakespeare’s indoor venue, but in 1995 launched the “Actor’s Renaissance Season.” Applying the research of Tiffany Stern, which was in turn based on the work of her uncle, Patrick Tucker, and Don Weingust’s observations of the OSC, the actors recreate the Elizabethan acting process. Each actor works from a cue script and arrives with lines memorized and open ears for cue

67. Ibid., 38.

68. Don Weingust, *Acting from Shakespeare's First Folio: Theory, Text and Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 160.

69. Ibid., 161.

lines. The actors are in charge of creating appropriate stage pictures, safe stage violence, and a cohesive story for an audience. Stern writes,

[A]s players seem to have been cast in similar kinds of roles during a theatrical season, and were generally cast in parts that matched their actual personalities, there was less need for any actor to work on issues of characterization: kingly types would usually be kings, 'braggarts' (proud, boasting types) would play braggarts, and the clown would be the clown. This helped actors perform different parts on a daily basis, while also making those parts 'make sense' not just to the actors playing them but also to the watching audience.⁷⁰

ASC, a repertory company, could similarly “type-cast” certain actors as certain roles in order to experiment with a rehearsal devoid of psychological analyses. The text then held the psychology and the actors needed to present a vocally and visually clear production.

The “Actors Renaissance Season” experiences are complimented by the other “original practices” which the company follows. The theatre’s mission supports Universal lighting, doubling of roles, gender blind casting, contextual costuming, and live music.⁷¹ The Universal lighting of the ASC goes by the catchy phrase “We do it with the lights on.” Simulating the daylight or candle lit performances with modern lighting technology; the space permits the actors to see the audience and the audience to see each other.

70. Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Page to Stage* (London: Routledge, 2004), 64.

71. Ralph Alan Cohen, “What We Do,” American Shakespeare Center, <http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com/about/WhatWeDo.html> (accessed April 30, 2006).

Doubling of roles is an obvious comparison to original staging practices. Shakespeare's companies were small and his casts large; therefore, it can be assumed that one actor played more than one part. In addition, the audience may have had some response or found meaning in the parallel performances of a single actor in several parts. The gender-blind casting in original practices however is problematic and raises the question that if both men and women are on the stage together, does not the play's integrity change in direct contrast to a cast of all men? To the ASC, "contemporary" costuming means modern as befits the play without obligation to historical accuracy of the text (i.e., no togas for Caesar). The live music, which underscores and highlights the show, is suited to the concept of the performance and is modern.⁷² The ASC thus appears to believe in the text as a practice in itself and further believes that to suit it to the time is to honor Shakespeare's *raison d'être*.

Amidst all of these (re)constructed performances, what constitutes original practices? Every company sets its own standards for what makes an original practices production. "Even those productions conceived as 'original practices' for the Globe cherry-picked particular 'original practices' elements to explore on stage, while rejecting others."⁷³ Practitioners attempting to establish universal standards of original practices for performance must take into account the vast scholarship of the historical context of the period. Scholars attempting to establish universal standards of original practices as a type of historiographical lens through which to analyze text must take into account the practicalities of production.

72. Ibid.

73. Jenny Tiramani, "Exploring early modern stage and costume design," in Carson and Karim-Cooper, 58.

Alan Dessen and Andrew Gurr, as scholars, have supported interdisciplinary Shakespeare scholarship and practice. Dessen probes the text and the elements of performance as a historian to discover what modern scholars call *new* and what Elizabethans thought *obvious*. “Indeed, what needs continual emphasis, especially for those who have not worked with the extant evidence, is how often the theatre historian must struggle, sometimes in vain, to discover what would have been so obvious as not to need observing in the 1590’s.”⁷⁴

Gurr, a prolific scholar and writer, has changed modern assumptions of Shakespeare in performance by providing scholarship about the history and use of the stage structure as well as the societal construct of the period. His work, *Playgoer’s in Shakespeare’s London*, provides information on the audiences for which playwrights were writing - the education, awareness, and aesthetics of an Elizabethan audience. In *Staging in Shakespeare’s Theatres*, co-written with Mariko Ichikawa, the audiences’ capability of moving to better seats, the hidden stage directions in the text, and the requirements of the space on both actor and audience are discussed and demonstrated through a reconstruction of *Hamlet* at The Globe. Creating an intersection between scholar and practitioner, this research provides historical context, structural information that might help with staging, and sociological information, which may influence choices regarding audience interaction.

Despite the research and aspects of original practices incorporated into production, understanding Elizabethan acting technique, particularly as it relates to

74. Alan C. Dessen, *Recovering Shakespeare’s Theatrical Vocabulary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 25.

the body in performance, remains elusive. Elizabethan acting techniques have come under scrutiny: the appropriate use of iambic pentameter, the vocal inflection and accents of the Elizabethan actor, stage directions found in the text, the ability to enter and exit based on placement of the door on the stage, direct contact with the audience, use of gesture, and the pervading mystery of psychological acting.

In 1951, B.L. Joseph connected the orator and the actor in order to codify a technique. Incorporating the documentation of oratory by Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, charts of rhetoric gesture by John Bulwer, and records of Elizabethan acting performances, Joseph connected techniques of action and pronunciation for the Elizabethan actor that are now assumed.⁷⁵ Alan Dessen has done intensive work on props, entrances and exits, editing and text. Andrew Gurr's scholarship places Shakespeare's work in its historical context, by discussing not only plays, but playgoers, and other key events. David Crystal has begun work on "original pronunciation" at the Globe. Patrick Tucker's work on the secrets of the First Folio inspired a deeper analysis of Quartos and rehearsal processes by his niece Tiffany Stern. These contributions have created an assumption of textual authority. "Everything old is new again" has come true in original staging practices.

The multiple theatres working with original practices, in any form, continue to explore space, lighting and acting and have not exhausted the field. The search will continue as more Elizabethan Theatres are built around the world. Shakespeare will continue being translated into a variety of languages and more scholarship will be needed to redefine the "original" in "original practices." And, like William Poel,

75. B.L. Joseph, *Elizabethan Acting* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 3. Both this edition and its republication are discussed further in Chapter Two.

Shakespeare scholars all over the globe can continue to believe, and make audiences believe, that Shakespeare “was a practical playwright who, given a theatre something like his own, could hold the stage by his own virtuosity.”⁷⁶ Now that I have defined what I believe to be the important foundations in creating an interpreting model, I will explore other scholars’ work in this field and their perspective of Shakespeare interpretation.

Perspectives on Shakespeare and Sign Language

The virtuosity of Shakespeare makes his stories universal, which enables them to be translated into countless languages. Signed languages, as a part of the translation studies of Shakespeare, are often considered insignificant to the field because the interpretation into ASL is as temporal as a performance or is perceived by some to be limited to a small community of understanding. Two scholars have discussed the phenomenon of sign language interpretation: Peter Novak, from a theatre scholar perspective and Peter Lewylyn-Jones, from an interpreter perspective.

Peter Novak founded the ASL Shakespeare Project in order to document a definitive translation for a performance of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*. Novak, a signer⁷⁷ and a reviewer for *American Theatre Magazine*, was familiar with the National Theatre of the Deaf and sought to create a scholarly “fusion” piece,

76. Obituary of William Poel, *Daily Telegraph*, Dec, 1934.

77. A “signer” refers to any Hearing person who is proficient in ASL but is not a child of Deaf parents or trained/certified as an interpreter.

American Sign Language "embodies" Deaf culture and contains a history, a rhetoric, and a poetics all its own. The ASL Shakespeare Project brings Shakespeare into contact with this language, and vice versa, so that both will be illuminated. As a result of this cultural fusion, we hope ASL will become more widely recognized within the canon of scholarly study. In addition, we anticipate that ASL will be acknowledged as a source for rich and creative performance techniques in theater, music, film, and visual representation. Shakespeare, too, will need to be reconsidered in purely visual terms as a newly constructed cultural document among a vast history of interpretations, representations, and performances.⁷⁸

In the process of creating the text for production, Novak seemed to privilege the role of director over the role of scholar in primarily two ways. First, the translation was created with one particular production concept in mind, not allowing for the creation of a script that can be passed on to be adapted or reinterpreted by future theatre companies. Second, though a thoroughly investigated and researched visual narrative was created dramaturgically, the gestural and acting techniques of the Elizabethan period do not appear to be incorporated into the translation. This clearly is evidenced by the use of modern signifiers in place of more universal gestures (i.e., using the middle finger as an insult instead of a more contextually suitable insulting gesture), which is available in the DVD documentation of the production.⁷⁹ The ASL Shakespeare Project however successfully crafted a translated script for the actors of the production to provide a Deaf theatre experience for a general audience.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, the project did not document the influence of ASL on the text for the

78. Peter Novak, "Project Description," ASL Shakespeare Project, <http://www.yale.edu/asl12night/project.html> (accessed April 29, 2006).

79. *William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night*, DVD, ASL Shakespeare Project, directed by Peter Novak (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2006).

80. Although a DVD of the production is available, the script CD-ROM is not available or archived for the public.

actors in performance, how the narrative is affected by characterization of one role by two actors, or the audience reception differences between the Deaf audiences, hearing audiences, and hearing audiences who know ASL.

Unlike Peter Novak's scholar/translator/director role, Peter Llewellyn-Jones discusses the challenges of interpreting Shakespeare into British Sign Language from the perspective of the interpreter.⁸¹ He takes into account the "intent, and indeed, interpretation of the director,"⁸² as well as the unique challenges of a physical language interpretation. Llewellyn-Jones does not consider, however, the need for rehearsed interpretation, dramaturgical resources, or the influence a translated text may have on a hearing audience or to the field of Shakespeare studies.⁸³

An interpreter is trained to facilitate communication without being an intrusive, or in some cases even noticeable, part of the dialogue. Llewellyn-Jones' priority in performance is the Deaf audience having equal access to the theatre experience. A rehearsed performance, he believes, will stifle the interpreter's ability to match the actor's interpretation "on the hoof." The interpreter thus has no need for a textual analysis to provide a simple interpretation for meaning and trying to remember a rehearsed interpretation "distracts from the task of processing the incoming message." He also assumes the Deaf audience requires an interpretation at

81. British Sign Language is a completely different language than American Sign Language, however, they do share similar linguistic foundations (as two spoken languages might). For more information, see: <http://www.britishsignlanguage.com>.

82. Peter Llewellyn-Jones, "Interpreting Shakespeare's Plays into British Sign Language," in *Shakespeare and the Language of Translation*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004), 200.

83. Ibid.

the level of meaning as opposed to the level of poetics, as they have “a restricted access to the English language and have learnt it...through print and other visual symbols....”⁸⁴ Textual analysis notwithstanding, he accounts for some of the environmental factors that influence the performance as a whole. In particular, he focuses on the placement of the interpreter and the incorporation of “the energy on stage.”⁸⁵

Placement of the interpreter does not only refer to where in the theatre s/he stands in proximity to audience and action of the stage, but also to the number of interpreters necessary for a production. The placement of the interpreter is dependant upon the space itself and the boundaries of the actors and audience. Llewellyn-Jones does not go into detail about the proximity to action (with exceptions of avoiding staged violence and dancing). He discusses the issue of a lone interpreter’s fatigue in what may be a three-hour production. Despite the protracted length of a production, he does not believe more than one interpreter at a performance will be successful. Llewellyn-Jones rationalizes that the need to recall characters and role switching presents a “cognitive distraction” and the engagement of more than one interpreter in dialogue creates a parallel performance as opposed to an interpretation. A single interpreter, he claims, can “react to everything that was happening and ‘reflect’ the energy of the stage.”⁸⁶

84. Ibid., 205.

85. Ibid.

86. B.L. Joseph, 207.

Llewellyn-Jones does not offer options for avoiding single interpreter's fatigue, nor how more than one interpreter for a production might be successful. In contrast to this experience, the American theatre community has long been providing a team of two to four interpreters for a single production.⁸⁷ The rehearsal process and text analysis conducted as a team resolves the cognitive recall issue of which interpreter is signing for which character and the issue of parallel performance is often resolved in the physical placement of the interpreters. The team approach also allows for consistency in character development through signing style for the audience. In the hands of unpracticed theatre interpreters, however, team interpreting may overreach the boundaries of access and become a separate performance. This is also an issue that can be tempered in rehearsal.

Reflecting the energy on stage, as Llewellyn-Jones phrases it, is no simple task in theatrical interpreting, if an interpreter is *reacting to* the events on stage that places him/her in the role of narrator. Providing a narration of the play is not providing an interpretation of the performance and in this way Llewellyn-Jones contradicts his claim to provide equal access to the performance as a whole. An interpreter, who is rehearsed, knowledgeable, and *mirroring* the energy of the characters with the performance and not at the performance, provides a successful

87. The use of two interpreters is a standard of practice established by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), founded in 1964. The practice of using two or more interpreters in theatrical production is documented by the archive of HandsOn Inc., a not-for-profit company for theatre in the Metro/NYC area as well as the Creative Access, an interpreting company for the DC/Metro area. Hands On Sign Interpreted Performances, "Hands On Information," <http://www.handson.org> (accessed February 2, 2009). Creative Access, "Interpreter Policies," http://www.creativeaccess.org/interpsvcs_policies.html (accessed February 2, 2009).

interpretation that is both rehearsed and spontaneous.⁸⁸ An interpretation based in rehearsal but flexible in performance provides full access to meaning, poetics, and performance. My goal is to create a blend of Peter Llewellyn-Jones's experience and approach to text as a British theatrical interpreter and Peter Novak's director/scholar approach to find an interdisciplinary discourse that can benefit not only the fields of interpreting and performance, but also is useful as a pedagogical tool for both Deaf and Hearing students of classical texts.

Two-dimensional and Three-dimensional Documentation

Any documentation of a theatrical event to make a visual-spatial-textual event understood in a written format is a challenge. Scholars have gleaned information and theorized performances based on recollections in personal journals, critical reviews, and other written descriptions of moments during performance. Attempting to understand and analyze gesture, as a part of the performance event is an additional challenge when limited to (one-dimensional) written text to express three-dimensional thought. In order to provide the clearest examples of gesture and ASL in performance artistic renderings of physicality and embedded video clips will be utilized in concert with written descriptions of movement whenever possible. Click directly on the video clips to view the gesture/ASL segments. In traditionally printed versions of this dissertation each video will be viewed as a single still photograph.⁸⁹

88. See Chapter Four for a further analysis of this assertion in practice.

89. Live links to the video are available on <http://www.youtube.com> for a limited time.

The Dissertation

In order to appeal to a broad audience, I have attempted to set forth a simple yet logical structure of this dissertation. The introduction provides an overview of my methodology and interdisciplinary approach to gesture, ASL and performance theory. Chapter Two provides a historical and theoretical frame for gesture in both the D/deaf and performance communities. The inclusion of the Deaf community into Theatre history is its own topic. Deaf members of religious groups, schools, garment workers, and nobility all influenced and were influenced by theatrical events. Chapter Three discusses the use of gesture (rhetorical, performance, and sign language) in performance through an analysis of sketches, charts, and integral video. The chapter focuses on the influence of gesture on text and will highlight two-dimensional depictions of John Bulwer's chirologia and Francois Delsarte's gestural system as compared to the same gestures in motion with embedded video clips. The chapter will also include textual samples of Juliet from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in ASL.⁹⁰ The process of theatrical interpreting currently has only one instructional manual offered by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, which is a practical manual and does not touch upon the dramaturgical elements of the

90. All Shakespeare texts referenced in this dissertation are the most recently available Arden editions of the text. I used the Arden editions because my scholarship in this dissertation focuses on the interpreting process and I thus rely on the academically accepted editing skills of Arden.

interpreting process.⁹¹ Chapter Four follows the experiences of an interpreter in an original staging practices environment. The discussion of incorporating an interpreter into the American Shakespeare Center's productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* is limited due to the difficulties of describing three-dimensional thought and my inability to video tape the performance due to restrictions imposed by Actor's Equity. My personal analysis of the process and execution in this chapter includes the performance of all the elements presented in this dissertation - the interpreting process, cultural mediation, use of classical/performance/ rhetorical gesture, practicalities of access for the Deaf community, practicalities for the performance community, and moments during performance when the Deaf and Theatre communities intersect. My goal in focusing on the point of intersection is to highlight an unexplored but substantial framework, where the discourses across disciplines and cultures connect and have the potential to bring forth new perspectives on performance, language, and culture.

91. Julie Gebron, *Sign the Speech: An Introduction to Theatrical Interpreting*, (OR: Butte Publications, 1996).

Chapter Two: Histories

If memory is knowledge then I know my journey has crossed through several cultures.

--Eugenio Barba

*I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;
A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine is a sad one.*

--*The Merchant of Venice*

American Sign Language and gesture, though serving similar communicative purposes are separate systems. Gesture, lacking a linguistic foundation, is informally codified and culturally contextual. ASL, as a language with semantic and syntactic rules, however, utilizes gesture as linguistic support. Therefore gesture in performance may be reconsidered as a structured system by using the linguistic foundations of ASL. In order to support connections between the languages (communication systems) of the Deaf and the Performance communities, this chapter will discuss the intersections of the communities historically, as well as consider the cultural implications of using American Sign Language as a part of, and tool for, understanding gesture in performance.

These apparently parallel histories have surprising and significant moments of intersection. As I explore these moments, a possible framework or paradigm for understanding the challenges of a physical and therefore temporal experience emerges. This chapter examines further the feasibility of a dialogue developing between the Deaf and performing communities as a result of establishing the signed

language as cultural material, which supports the identity of the Deaf as a marginalized people. This inextricable bond between language and identity is also seen in the development and codification of gesture as the language of character.¹

Historiography

In establishing his theory of Theatre Anthropology, Eugenio Barba created a methodology of research through a combination of practice and observation which “...confirmed the existence of principles that on a pre-expressive level, determine scenic presence, the body-in-life able to make perceptible that which is invisible: the intention.”² Barba’s work focuses on the performer’s act of performing as opposed to what the spectator (in this case audience) observes in a performance.³ Previously described by other theatre scholars as the actor’s “passions”, Barba labels this “bios”, a pre-expressive state that is demonstrated physically. “Bios”, something innate in the actor's body, must be learned technically in order to be assimilated into the

1. Physicality and gesture are present in every culture but this dissertation will focus on the histories of England and France as these histories had the greatest influence on American Deaf culture.

2. Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: Guide to Theatre Anthropology* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 7.

3. Barba discusses the creation of a performance as something that can be analyzed by the performer, but that an audience “spectator” can only analyze the performance as an abstract form, as “presentation.” Ibid.

individual personality of the actor rather than being dominated by technique. Barba considers "bios", therefore, "a logical and not a chronological before."⁴

Barba considers his research empirical and transcultural. What then is the research question that Barba seeks to answer? In a post-colonial, post-structuralist discourse, Barba brings together the physical elements of cultural performances to attempt to conduct an analysis of which expressions are innate or learned and how learned expressions or "techniques" become internalized and thus are considered innate by having become extensions of the pre-expressive bios of the performer. The analysis of the innateness of such expressions becomes debatable when the goal of Barba's transculturalism appears to elide the cultural contexts of the expressions or gestures. Specifically, when he posits a commonality in a pre-expressive state, Barba does not acknowledge overtly the cultural filters or culturally significant pre-lingual taxonomy. The importance of signed language and cultural identity, however, requires that the signed language as a cultural material of a minority or marginalized group is acknowledged.

Jim Sharpe's article, *History from Below*, propounds "the necessity of trying to understand people in the past as far as a modern historian is able, in the light of their own experience and their own reactions to that experience."⁵ Following Sharpe's logic in framing the question of gesture and performance, I therefore posit a still relatively unexplored connection between the analysis of gesture in performance

4. Ibid., 9.

5. Jim Tharpe, "History from Below," in *New Perspectives on History*, ed. Peter Burke (State College, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001). 25-42.

and the Deaf community's development of sign language. "History from Below," as a means of understanding history from the perspective of marginalized communities, not only reveals the forgotten history of those communities but broadens and deepens our discourse of the hegemonic community. Gesture, as a form of communication, is rarely taken into consideration as cultural material.⁶ Rethinking the idea of gesture as it relates to the cultural material of a signed language provides not only a lens to Deaf culture, but shifts the paradigm of gestural analysis from something either paralinguistic or meta-linguistic to a language with formal linguistic structure. Having a useful framework both culturally and linguistically permits the analysis of performing written/spoken text with gesture (rhetorical and/or emotional) through the linguistic foundations of ASL. In so doing, the lens of the Deaf community and its language provide a tangible analytical structure to a traditionally temporal discourse.

The challenge in developing the new paradigm is in applying the concept of shared knowledge to a community that did not document its language until the 16th century. Existing documentation is difficult to use because of the challenges of extracting meaning from a written description of a three-dimensional gesture or a two-dimensional drawing.⁷ Similar to the oral traditions' struggles to be recognized without a written form, the lack of documentation of sign languages has created a

6. 'Cultural Material' as discussed in Jill Dolan, review of "Reading the Material Theatre," by Ric Knowles, *Theatre Journal* 57, no. 4 (December 2005): 781-782.

7. The documentation was most often created by the Hearing community for the Deaf community in order to assimilate them into the mainstream education system. *The Deaf History Reader*, ed. John Vickrey Van Cleve (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2007).

formidable challenge in conducting an analysis of the development of the language and culture of the Deaf community.

Cynthia L. Peters, in her book on Deaf Literature, borrowing the carnivalesque theories of Bakhtin, describes the intermixing of literary and nonliterary forms in Deaf culture as the “Deaf carnival.”⁸ Discussing how Deaf culture is passed on through liveness and language, she states that “[A]ppropriately for carnival, the more physical forms of Deaf discourse appear side by side with sophisticated drama, ASL poetry, and eloquent story telling.”⁹ This physical discourse also provides a unique narrative structure.

Many native Deaf dramatic productions defy classical unity and linearity, as well as ignoring classical decorum. In other words, they disregard the conventional separation of the high genres from the low genres, high behavior from low behavior, and tragedy from comedy. To be sure, such generic boundary crossing has a history as long as that of these respective genres; perhaps the playwright best known for nonconformity is Shakespeare whose tragedies feature rustics and fools, whose ‘problem plays’ and ‘tragicomedies’ famously defy categorization. To this day some object to these liberties; but Shakespeare’s refusal to obey the classical canons may have also contributed to his popularity, especially among the common people in his audience, the groundlings.¹⁰

The significance of storytelling by the Deaf community is that it’s not just a performance but it is performative, in that the story and the act of telling it provide a frame for Deaf culture.¹¹ It blurs the traditional boundaries between body and text.

8. Cynthia L. Peters, *Deaf American Literature: From the Carnival to the Canon* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2002).

9. Ibid., 43.

10. Ibid., 109.

The Deaf, a “visually oriented people, needs to gather together to keep their visual vernacular and culture in force.”¹² So too the theatre community develops systems of the visual and textual in order to both create and reflect culture. The cultural structure and norms of any given period are going to be reflected in theatrical architecture, technology, and the fashions worn on stage. The action of the theatrical event, however, is how the body integrates all of these elements. How the text is embodied in gesture can illuminate dramatic actions from a script as well as textual and emotional subtleties not realized in spoken language. Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, eighteenth century French philosopher and linguist stated,

...[T]he first human language had been a *langage d'action*, consisting of gestures and movements, it was a common and widespread idea that gestural language had been a universal human language. Accordingly, most theoreticians of the period agreed that acting should be an imitation of this natural language. ...Nature's language had to be transferred to the stage to provide actors with the desired patterns of natural behavior.¹³

Examining the development of the gestural system on stage as a cultural phenomenon permits a point of access to dramatic texts and cultural history that has yet to be fully explored due to the limitations of our perception of physical memory.

11. J.L. Austin defines performative utterance as “derived, of course, from 'perform', the usual verb with the noun 'action': it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action.” J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975), 6.

12. Peters, 205.

13. Erika Fischer-Lichte, “Theatre and the Civilizing Process: An Approach to the History of Acting,” in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past*, ed. Thomas Postlewaite and Bruce A. McConachie (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 26.

Classical Gesture

Socrates, within Plato's *Cratylus*, questions, "If we had neither voice nor tongue, and yet wished to manifest things to one another, should we not, like those which are at present mute, endeavor to signify our meaning by the hands, head, and other parts of the body?"¹⁴ Socrates, however, is speaking only about the desire to express thought when one is incapable of speech. The concept of "signify our meaning" presents gesture as a secondary system of communication or one to be used in support of spoken language. Gesture as a primary system of communication includes a broad range of non-verbal signifying actions.¹⁵ Rather than focus on gesture as *any* physical action this work posits two specific categories: gesture as a specific physical action with meaning that replaces a spoken language, or gesture as a simultaneous and complimentary system of physical communication with spoken communication.

In 100 AD, Quintilian documented the use of gesture as a rhetorical tool in his *Institutio oratoria*.¹⁶ The document was a manual for the young orator in training; it discusses the connection between "seen-language" and "heard-language." Gesture was used in two ways, as a support for the meaning of the spoken word as well as

14. Plato, *Cratylus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Echo Library, 2006), 22.

15. Prostrating oneself before a religious leader, loaning money as a "gesture of good faith," shaking hands at a first meeting, or winking at a friend are all different (if culturally specific) gestures.

16. Bill Thayer, "Quintilian: *Institutio Oratoria*," http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Quintilian/Institutio_Oratoria/home.html (accessed February 2, 2007).

meaningful in its own right. This use of gesture would encompass the entire body, stance, and spatial relationship to audience, movement, and facial expressions.

This shifted in the Middle Ages when gesture was attached primarily to religion and cultural mores. The body was considered a container for the soul and, as a result, had the ability to perform “good” or “bad” gestures. For example, in the church kneeling, eye gaze, and communion were gestures to signify obedience to God. Outside the church it was one’s duty to exhibit control of the body, limiting the use of rhetorical gestures in everyday life.¹⁷

Quintilian’s *Institio oratoria* is an exhaustive manual of the Roman educational practices in which he established his philosophy of education.¹⁸ Quintilian writes of gesture as an intrinsic part of any public speaking. In “Anglo-Saxon gestures and the Roman Stage,” Charles Reginald Donwald provides specific parallels of Quintilian’s record of gesture and references in Roman drama where these gestures may have been applied through artistic renderings.

The . . . one in which all the fingers are bent except the middle one which is bent to meet the thumb. According to Quintilian this is useful for reproaching or refuting: ‘gestus ille...in exprobando et coarguendo acer atque instans.’ We find the gesture used exactly in the latter sense by Hegio in *Phormio* when he is refuting the legal opinion given by Cratinus on the question of . . . marriage.¹⁹

17. James J. Murphy, *Quintilian on the Teaching of Speaking and Writing: Translations from Books One, Two, and Ten of the Institutio Oratoria*, ed. James J. Murphy (Carrbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 8.

18. Ibid.

19. C.R. Dodwell, *Anglo Saxon Gestures and the Roman Stage* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 36-7.

The use of codified gesture in art provided a means of expressing a specific message. The qualities of a good orator, however, did not only involve the message transmitted but that it was transmitted persuasively and beautifully. Quintillian discussed that embedded gestures, which were both learned and instinctive, follow the words and arguments and presented them as tools for excellence in presentation. He noted further that the qualities of a persuasive speaker were also important qualities for a good actor. Gesture, however, tended to broaden depending on the text. As a rumor tends to grow in exaggeration as it passes through a speaker's mouth to the ears of eager listeners, a gesture too will become more ostentatious as an actor gets the attention of and feedback from the audience by its responses, such as increasing laughter or more tears/sobbing. Discovering the original space and meaning of a gesture has a similar challenging inquiry as that of defining a writer's thought in crafting the lines of dialogue in a play. Without a full understanding of the proper context, this is a daunting task. Quintillian describes some of the gestures used (and used well) by specific orators which he felt were successful in a specific speech or moment of a speech.

Rethinking the Player's Passion

Joseph Roach in *The Player's Passion* created a substantial foundation in support of the work linking the physicality of the actor and orator. Focusing on the actor as machine, Roach connects the passions, humours, gestures, and oratory through a lens of physiology. Roach examines the key works of Quintilian, Heywood, and Bulwer, among others, who each attempted to document a theory of

physical performance. Accordingly, the actor's body as machine is not unexplored territory. However, uncovering the confluence of physical response and the desire to communicate is exacting because of the limits of our ability to separate mind and body and use emotions (or passions) as the tie that binds. The challenge becomes trying to extract three separate elements of a given moment; the body's need to respond, the mind's need to communicate, and the emotional drive of both. Roach applies the scientific modeling of Thomas Kuhn. As Kuhn claims,

[A] paradigm may emerge from a single work, which therefore dominates the field for generations These works show two characteristics. First, they are sufficiently powerful to deflect a large group of practitioners away from competing theories and methods of investigation. Second they are open-ended enough to create a whole new set of problems 'for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve.'²⁰

Roach suggests that the major paradigm shift began with Denis Diderot's critique of acting technique in *The Paradox of the Actor* and then continued with Stanislavsky's *An Actor Prepares* (1936). He begins, however, with the passions of Quintillian who "remained the dominant authority" in rhetoric and performance during the Renaissance. Roach claims that modern critics of classical acting (presentational) style ". . . have lost sight of the scientific and pseudo-scientific underpinnings of rhetorical theory. The debate over the relative formalism or naturalism of seventeenth century acting can be traced to the disinclination on both sides to

20. Joseph Roach, *The Players Passion* (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 14.

understand the historic links between acting, rhetoric and ancient physiological doctrines.”²¹

Roach also connects acting, and rhetoric, and physiology to the work of John Bulwer in 1644.²² According to Roach, John Bulwer in his treatise on oratory and gesture titled “Chirologia: the natural language of the hand” used Quintilian’s work as a foundation for analyzing gesture in everyday life. A physician, Bulwer focused on the logic of the senses and gesture as a signifier of a physiological function or state. Roach posits that Bulwer’s system is a combination of physiological reasoning and the dramatics contained in a Shakespearean text. He uses Bulwer’s *Il Ploro* (weeping) as an example of this duopoly in both Hamlet’s directive to Gertrude “leave wringing of your hands” as well as in *Macbeth* with the shift of the hand shape of *Il Ploro* to *Innocentiam ostendo* (I display innocence), Lady Macbeth’s washing of her hands.²³ It is interesting to note that Roach suggests this particular gesture, which is seen as one of innocence, is juxtaposed against the textual references of Lady Macbeth’s guilt.

Bulwer’s work and its connection to Roman rhetorical gesture is referenced in studies on classical acting techniques, i.e., a tool to understand possible presentational gestures in a highly stylized technique. Specifically, B.L. Joseph discussed the

21. Ibid., 30.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., 37.

chirologia/chironomia in reference to Elizabethan acting.²⁴ In his first edition, Joseph posits that the charts of Bulwer suggest a highly styled performance by Elizabethan actors. Gesture signified the emotions or passions as distinct from the skill of textual recitation. The response was "a series of hostile essays attacking his book on crypto-scientific grounds; i.e., what emotion in acting is really like." With the publication of a second edition, Joseph, "delete[d] his account of rhetoric in humanist education." Using the same foundational research on gesture, he proposed that Elizabethan acting style was more "natural" or "methods still used in the modern theatre and advocated by Stanislavski and his followers." The continuing debate about formalism or naturalism in seventeenth century acting "can be traced to the disinclination of both sides to understand the historic links between acting, rhetoric, and ancient physiological doctrines."²⁵ I propose these fields can be integrated by acknowledging Deaf history and American Sign Language as a part of the dialogue.

Roach suggests that the gesture is a physicalization of an inner passion or machination that connects the humors and passions to the body with a psychological perspective, consistent with Bulwer's model but fails to mention Bulwer's work with the Deaf community and its influence on his theory of gesture. Bulwer's work with the Deaf community in his professional capacity as a physician influenced his reading

24. B.L. Joseph, *Elizabethan Acting* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 34-59.

25. Roach, *The Players Passion*, 227-8.

of gesture and signs. He began by charting common gestures for his own use and eventually took it a step further and developed an alphabet of gestures for the Deaf.²⁶

Though the first to publish about sign languages, Bulwer was not the first to record the use of them. Church records of the day show a Deaf marriage "ceremony conducted in sign language" and Richard Carew's *Survey of Cornwall*, written in 1602, noted a well developed, intelligible, regional sign language.²⁷ Despite the connection of sign language/gesture and the Deaf community, no research has acknowledged the potential of including the Deaf community in the ongoing study of performance gesture. Sign language and rhetorical gesture have been thought of as distinct, despite the fact that they were developing simultaneously and with some cultural overlap.

Thus, Roach's seminal book on rethinking the actor's body as an object of performance in some ways becomes the influencing paradigm he discusses in his preface. At no point in his discussion on physiology and acting, or the connections to rhetorical gesture as a semiotic sign system based in the known sciences of the period, does Roach mention the continued presence of the Deaf community and the gestural system that, though not yet formally codified, was firmly present in society.

26. There is no evidence that the alphabet was used and was anything more than theoretical.

27. Nora Ellen Groce, *Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language - Hereditary Deafness on Martha's Vineyard* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 70-71.

Intersections of Deaf and Performance

The development and documentation of a manual alphabet began in the 16th century. Geronimo Cardono, an Italian physician, declared that the deaf were capable of learning through a signed communication and therefore codifying gesture for the education of the deaf was necessary.²⁸ It was the philosophical leap that occurred in the seventeenth century, however, that supported the documentation of gesture as a means of communication and language.²⁹

The work of George Dalgarno, *The Deaf and Dumb Man's Tutor*, published in 1680, is significant for its documentation of the education of a deaf student using a signed language.³⁰ He also published *The Art of Signs* in 1661 with an interest in using the language of the deaf as a universal language.³¹ John Bulwer, more commonly recognized work *Chirologia/Chironomia*, connected the “manual language” of the deaf, common gestures which support everyday spoken communication, and the “rhetorical arts.” Both works contain sketches and charts of signs, but are mostly limited to the handshape. The recognition of signed communication also appeared in references of everyday seventeenth century events.

28. This was also important to Deaf history as Cardono was the first physician/philosopher that publicly disagreed with Aristotle's statements about Deaf education.

29. Emily Cockayne, “Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England,” *The Historical Journal* 46, no. 3 (September, 2003): 493-510.

30. David Cram and Jaap Maat, eds., *George Dalgarno on Universal Language: "The Art of Signs" (1661), "The Deaf and Dumb Man's Tutor" (1680), and the Unpublished Papers*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 137-290.

29. Ibid., 291-348.

The journal of John Evelyn, a founding member of the Royal Society, mentioned meeting Sir John Gawdy, a knight who communicated with his family through signs.³² Samuel Pepys journal, which documented his life's daily activities from dinner plans to theatre performances to travels with the court, mentions two different members of the seventeenth century Deaf community.³³ The first one was a "melancholy Major Waters" who, while in the throes of unrequited love, was not a witty conversationalist. Pepys mentions his deafness and his status as a member of the military. The Major's ability to carry on a spoken conversation, however witless, allows for the assumption that his hearing was lost in service and he has blended into mainstream society. Pepys also mentions deafness and sign language in the context of the great fire in London. On November 9, 1666, a young deaf boy interrupts Pepys' dinner with George Downing, Pepys employer, to tell them of the fire. Downing communicates with the boy using sign language and interprets for Pepys.³⁴ Pepys commentary on language, communication, and cultural events are shaped by these experiences. This is demonstrated in the later years of his diary, with his membership in the Royal Society, his interest in the natural order of the universe, and

32. "Diary of John Evelyn," University of Pennsylvania, <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/lookupid?key=olbp41061> (accessed April 30, 2008).

33. Samuel Pepys, "Diary of Samuel Pepys," Phil Gyford, <http://www.pepysdiary.com/> (accessed April 30, 2008).

34. Downing, from an area of Kent with a large Deaf population, which used Old Kent Sign Language, documented in personal records many members of the Deaf community as servants and possibly as part of a spy network.

"Dr. Wilkin's book on universal language which he acquired for his own library."³⁵

As an avid theatregoer, Pepys' diary included a review of *The Comical Revenge or Love in a Tub* by Sir George Etherege, "which is very merry, but only so by gesture, not wit at all."³⁶ Though he does not consciously connect the Deaf and Performance communities, Pepys does note the importance of theatre *as* physical expression and communication *through* physical expression.

Denis Diderot's prolific work on language and discourse also touched on both performance and understanding language through signed communication. "Diderot, 1713-84, coeditor of the *Encyclopédie* (1751-65), and the most prolific of its contributors, played a major part in his century's intellectual revolution."³⁷ *The Paradox of the Actor*, his contribution to acting theory, discusses the advantages and disadvantages of representational and presentational acting. "The *Paradoxe* itself was not printed until 1830, forty-six years after the death of its author; it is known to have been written in the 1770's, retouched and added to from time to time, and finally reworked about 1778."³⁸ Using observations of the work of David Garrick and other romantic actors, Diderot believed quality performance on stage came from, ". . . the conformity of action, diction, face, voice, movement, and gesture to an ideal model

35. Claire Tomalin, *Samuel Pepys: The Unequalled Self* (New York: Random House, 2002), 250.

36. Samuel Pepys, "Diary of Samuel Pepys," Phil Gyford, <http://www.pepysdiary.com/archive/1665/01/04/> (accessed April 30, 2008).

37. Lee Strasberg, introduction to *The Paradox of Acting*, by Denis Diderot, trans. Walter Herries Pollock (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), x.

38. *Ibid.*, x.

imagined by the poet, and frequently exaggerated by the actor.”³⁹ Diderot includes the stylized gesture as a method of conveying a non-textual (and therefore purely emotional) message to the audience. Diderot did not limit his observations on communication to the stage, as he also wrote *Letter on the Deaf and Dumb* (published 1751) to discuss, not the deaf experience, but the origins of language. He assumed the deaf had no “prejudices with regard to the manner of communicating his thoughts,”⁴⁰ and could be studied to determine the more “natural” presentation of (French) word order. Diderot’s interests in communication, the origins of language, appropriate gesture, and codifying these systems create an opportunity to further investigate the gray area of performance and physicality.

It was not until 1802 that a Deaf signing character was seen on stage. Though silent or mute characters may have been seen earlier, a convergence between performance and sign language was a trend in French comedy and melodrama utilizing a Deaf character or a character that feigned deafness. In French comedies, deafness appeared on stage when the “romantic lead in a comedy often adopted a ‘deaf’ character, but spoke normally when out of character.”⁴¹ In *The Mute* by Jean de Bigot Palaprat and David Augustin de Brueys, the lead character pretends to be deaf to gain access to his love. He arrives at her aunt’s home and “Everyone made

39. Denis Diderot, “The Paradox of Acting,” trans. Walter Herries Pollock, in *Theatre/Theory/Theatre*, ed. Daniel Gerould (New York: Applause, 2000), 201.

40. Denis Diderot, *Early Philosophical Works*, trans. and ed. Margaret Jourdain (London: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1916), 167.

41. Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Silent Poetry*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 22.

signs to him to which he responded with grace by which everyone was charmed.”⁴²

What the signs were or how the audience understood them is unclear.

Melodrama, “was largely responsible for bringing into the nineteenth century theatre a large popular audience” not only in France but in England and America.⁴³ The “affliction melodramas”, more than a dozen melodramas with a deaf or blind role, introduced characters that were not feigning disability but must overcome it.⁴⁴ Among the most popular of these is, *Deaf and Dumb or The Orphan: An Historical Drama in Five Acts* translated by J. Wright (1802), which tells the story of Julio, cast out from his noble family because he is deaf. He returns and must fight his evil uncle for the rights to his fortune. Celebrating his victory with friends, “Julio returns to St. Alme, takes one of his hands and places it on his heart, then gives what he has been writing into his other hand, and makes signs to read it.”⁴⁵ Despite using a system of gesture throughout the drama, the written note of thanks raises Julio to his noble state. Michael Booth argues that melodrama's original emphasis on dumbshow facilitated the mute or “dumb” role, which later became a figure representative of suffering and spiritual integrity.

42. Jean de Bigot Palaprat and David Augustin de Brueys, *The Mute* (1650-1721) in Mirzzoeff, 22.

43. Oscar G. Brockett and Franklin J. Hildy, *History of the Theatre*, 9th ed. (New York: Allyn and Bacon, 2003), 305.

44. Other plays considered “affliction dramas” include; *The Dumb Guide of Tyrol*, *The Death Plank or The Dumb Sailor*, *The Dumb Man of Manchester*, *The Blind Beggar of Moorfields*, *The Dumb Savoyard*, and *The Blind Orphan*.

45. August von Kotzebue, *Deaf and Dumb or the Orphan: An Historical Drama in Five Acts* (London: J. Wright for Vernor and Hood, 1802), 81.

Gesture as a part of the acting technique in affliction drama was not limited to deaf characters. *The Blind Boy*, a play similar in topic to *Deaf and Dumb* but depicting the “affliction” as blindness, utilizes gesture as a form of sentimental direct address to elicit an emotional response from an audience. In the beginning of the first act, Edmond enacts the following: “Edmond weeps, turns toward the window, stretches out one hand, and places the other on his heart--soft music.”⁴⁶ The logic of a blind boy seeking something out a window notwithstanding, the physicalization of emotion and need must be enacted for the audience to emotionally and intellectually connect with the story. In the case of affliction drama, “Gesture or physical expression not only indicates a ‘fictional feeling,’ but, in the case of *The Blind Boy* and *Deaf and Dumb*, it directs the spectator on how to recognize or deploy his/her own fellow-feeling by presenting a physical embodiment of the emotion.”⁴⁷

The presentational aspect of gesture was not only present on the stage but was integrated into the world of visual arts in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The visual art world studied the Deaf community as a means to improve portrayal of the human form. The artists Charles-Antoine Coyne and William Hogarth also were connected to the theatre and were well aware that the benefits of theatrical gesture and deaf signs improved the quality of their art. Hogarth noted that in his work “[m]y picture was my stage and men and women my actors who were by means of certain

46. James Kenney, *The Blind Boy: A Melo-drama in Two acts* (London: Thomas Hailes Lacy: 1801), act 1.

47. Sheila C. Moeschen, “Suffering silences, woeful afflictions: physical disability, melodrama, and the American charity movement.” *Comparative Drama* 40 (December 2006), 448.

Actions and express[ions] to Exhibit a dumb shew.”⁴⁸ The nascence of a Deaf identity could be described as materializing through art , exemplified when Laurent Clerc, a star pupil of the Institute des Sourds-Muet de Paris, commissioned a self-portrait for the school.⁴⁹ In his letter of commission, he represents himself as a member of a new class of students who considered itself to be Deaf - “educated, literate, and signing.”⁵⁰

Deaf Culture in the United States

The acceptance of physicality and cultural diversity in the United States also created an opportunity for the Deaf community.⁵¹ Laurent Clerc and Thomas Gallaudet founded the American School for the Deaf in 1817. The students were trained utilizing sign language, not speech training, unlike schools in Britain and Germany which focused on lip-reading and oral speech. The students came to the new American School for the Deaf from all over the United States, but a large number of the school’s students were from Martha’s Vinyard, an island five miles off the southeastern shore of Massachusetts. From 1690 to the mid-twentieth century, a

48. Shearer West, *The Image of the Actor: Verbal and Visual Representation in the Age of Garrick and Kemble* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 3.

49. Laurent Clerc would eventually join Thomas Gallaudet to open the first Deaf School in the United States in 1817.

50. Mirzzoeff, 89.

51. For more information on Deaf culture in America before 1817, see *The Deaf History Reader*, ed. John Vickrey Van Cleve (Washington, DC: Gallaudet Press, 2002).

high rate of genetic deafness appeared in the island population. The normal incidence rate for deafness in the general population in nineteenth century America was approximately 1 out of every 5700 people. The incidence on Martha's Vineyard was 1 out of every 155, a significant variance. In some areas of the island the ratios were even higher; in one town, for example, 1 in every 25 people was born deaf, and in a certain neighborhood of the same town the ratio was as high as one in four.⁵²

Consequently, both Deaf and Hearing people on Martha's Vineyard knew and used sign language.⁵³ A sign language believed to have started as a derivative of Old Kent Sign Language continued to develop and formalize on the Island.⁵⁴ As a result and out of necessity, the people on Martha's Vineyard were an open community where both Deaf and Hearing communicated in a signed language. The Martha's Vineyard students, the Deaf children who communicated through gesture and "home sign," and the Old French Sign Language of Laurent Clerc blended together at the American School for the Deaf and evolved into a new sign language we refer to as American Sign Language (ASL). Unfortunately, the scientific and medical developments of the late nineteenth century shifted the perception of deafness from a

52. Sherman Wilcox and Phyllis Wilcox, *Learning to See: American Sign Language as a Second Language* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet Press, 2000), 14.

53. Nora Ellen Groce, *Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 1-11.

54. As discussed in Groce, there is circumstantial evidence using census records and Pepys' diary (as previously mentioned), that a regionally known sign language was developed in Kent, England. Several families on Martha's Vineyard emigrated from Kent and likely initially used Old Kent Sign Language for communication.

cultural difference to a medically treatable handicap and of American Sign Language as the enemy of Deaf education.

The Milan Conference of 1880, which banned sign language from deaf education, made this perceptual downgrading of deafness crystal clear. Edward Miner Gallaudet and Rev. Thomas Gallaudet were among the protesters who fought against this new oralist method. Even though he failed to overturn the Milan resolutions, Gallaudet ensured that the United States would not be completely converted to oralism in two ways. First, he ensured that high school students in institutes for the deaf could use sign language and that Gallaudet College (now Gallaudet University) would remain open and operate as a university that permits full usage of sign language.⁵⁵

Delsartism

The nineteenth century interest in creating structure, rules, and methodology was not limited to science and education. In Paris, "Francois Delsarte took on this task when he set out to demonstrate that the laws of stage expression are discoverable and that these laws can be formulated as precisely as mathematical principles."⁵⁶ In order to find a system of performance that incorporated and integrated oratory, emotional fortitude, and gestural fluidity, he began to work with students. Through

55. John Vickrey Van Cleve and Barry A. Crouch, *A Place of Their Own – Creating Deaf Community in America* (Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press, 1989), 106-128.

56. Brockett and Hildy, 378-9.

this work Delsarte create his System of Expressions that relied heavily on gesture as the "language which is all-revealing."⁵⁷ The theories were brought to America in 1870, gaining him great notoriety. "The American vogue of Delsarte is unique, because Delsarte never came to the United States, nor did he publish any of his theories. His fame in America can be attributed chiefly to his pupil, James Steele MacKaye, who taught and lectured on the principles upheld by Delsarte."⁵⁸

Steele Mackaye made Delsarte's theories the most popular form of actor training from 1870-1900.⁵⁹ Mackaye's lecture, "Gesture as a Language," clearly highlights the physicality of presentation over voice. He states that "[p]recisely as we perceive in man a vital, mental, and moral principle of being—so in his body we find vital, mental, and moral agents of expression." Gesture, he claims, "often tells in an instant a story that would require a lifetime of words to reveal."⁶⁰ For several years, Mackaye toured on a university lecture circuit throughout the United States, focusing on Delsarte's "expressionist training" and "pantomime."⁶¹

57. George Albert Neely, "The School of Delsarte: Based on an Original Notebook" (master's thesis, Louisiana State University, 1942), 48.

58. Myra White Harang, "The Public Career of Francois Delsarte" (master's thesis, Louisiana State University, 1945), 1.

59. Virginia Elizabeth Morris, "The Influence of Delsarte in America as revealed through the lectures of Steele Mackaye." (master's thesis, Louisiana State University, 1941), 3.

60. Ibid., 32.

61. Details on the theoretical aspects of Delsarte will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Psychological Acting and Suppression of Physicality

The scientific perspective of medicine and the emergent psychological theories of the nineteenth century also became an irrevocable influence on acting technique and theatrical performance. The Moscow Art Theatre founded by Constantine Stanislavsky in 1896 was established with the objective of creating a new kind of theatrical performance. Stanislavsky, similar to Delsarte and other such practitioners, sought to integrate the technical skills of the actor (voice, diction, and physicality) with the emotional truth of a theatrical character. The widespread acceptance of and interest in the nascent neurological and psychological sciences developing in this period became the foundation of this emotional truth.

Stanislavsky's system integrated the gestural aspects of presentational acting, psychological analysis, and emotional truth through the use of "action." Unlike a system that equates a gesture with a specific thought or phrase, Stanislavsky defines what the actor does as Action/Counteraction or Activity. Defined as:

Action: What the actor does to solve the problem or fulfill the task set before his or her character by the play.

Counteraction: A term used in Active Analysis. An action that is "contradictory" to the impelling action in a scene... The clash of action and counteraction produces dramatic conflict.

Activities: The simple physical actions that set the context for the dynamic interplay of psychophysical actions and counteractions in plays and scenes.⁶²

Gesture then becomes a function of either an activity (setting a table) or the result of following through with an action or counteraction (an active verb). Stanislavsky, by

62. Sharon Marie Carnicke, *Stanislavski in Focus: An Acting Master for the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 211-212.

focusing on actions and counteractions, was trying to get actors to think of gesture as a synaptic function, the decision to do something active (to punish), as opposed to a physical movement to demonstrate a choice (clenching a fist).

It was Michael Chekhov, a Stanislavsky protégée, who returned to the idea of integrating action and gesture through the concept of "psychological gesture." The first step in creating a character, according to Chekhov, is to:

[a]sk yourself what the *main* desire of the character might be, and when you get an answer, even if it is only a hint, start to build your PG step by step, using at first you *hand and arm* only. ...Having once started this way, you will no longer find it difficult (in fact, it will happen by itself) to extend and adjust your particular gesture to your shoulders, your neck, the position of your head and torso, legs and feet, until your *entire* body is thus occupied.⁶³

Chekhov's "path to theory [may have been] different" from Stanislavsky's, but "its roots in the analysis of self were similar."⁶⁴ The actor has to feel an emotional subtext, which is the basis for the gesture. The focus on subtext and reasoning emotionality led to gesture losing status as a semantic system of the stage and it became a tool to spot "unrealistic" acting. The psychological gesture was a part of realistic acting that was considered to be natural, reasonable, and secondary to emotion.

This is not to insinuate that stylized theatre had disappeared. The Moscow Art Theatre also helped to develop the work of Vsevolod Meyerhold. Meyerhold, lacking patience with the naturalism of fourth wall staging of realism, wanted to retain the

63. Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor: on the technique of acting* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 67.

64. M.O. Knebel, introduction to 2nd edition of *Literaturnoe nasledstvie*, by Michael Chekhov (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1995), as discussed in Carnicke 98.

three-dimensionality of performance. He experimented with actors at the New Theatre and noted that, “The human body and the objects surrounding it—tables chairs, beds, cupboards, -- are all three dimensional; therefore the theatre, where the main element is the actor, must find inspiration in the plastic arts, not in painting. The actor must study the plasticity of the statue.”⁶⁵ According to Meyerhold, the responsibility of the theatre was to use the three dimensional performance of the actor to enable the audience to participate in the experience. To “break the magic barrier which even today exists in the form of footlights, divides the theatre into two opposed camps, the performers and the onlookers, no artery exists to unite these two separate bodies and preserve the unbroken circulation of creative energy.”⁶⁶

Theatres that are seeking a connection with an audience try to find ways to break this magical barrier. Playwrights create characters that reflect the lives of a specific group of people that they want to encourage to attend a play. Directors create pieces that shock, move, and titillate audiences in order to elicit an emotional response. Designers create a space that attempts to bring performers and audience together in new undiscovered shapes, in order to physically connect them. Performers use each of these things as tools, but must use the three-dimensionality of their bodies to create energy with each other, with the text, with the space and with the audience. If the audience has a barrier, as a Deaf audience does, an additional point of access is necessary to break that additional barrier.

65. Vsevolod Meyerhold, *Meyerhold on Theatre*, trans. Edward Braun (London: Methuen Publishing, 1998), 57.

66. *Ibid.*, 29.

This is the role of the ASL interpreter – to unite the performers and audience. Present as an element of the spectacle but maintaining the status of an onlooker, the interpreter serves as a conduit of the creative energy by providing access to the performance experience. A conduit of performance and energy, the interpreter is the personification of the intangible space between gesture, text, and emotion and must be fluent in all of these semiotic systems for the energy of performance to be maintained.

Conclusion

Hearing people approach and interpret the world through a learned system of meaning created through constant aural stimulation. Social negotiation, identity formation, and connection to history are formulated through communication, albeit, spoken communication. A community of people that have created an identity and mythology through language “is a powerful testimony to both the profound need and profound possibilities of human beings. Out of a striving for human language, generations of Deaf signers have fashioned a signed language rich enough to mine for poetry and storytelling. Out of a striving to interpret, to make sense of their world, they have created systems of meaning that explain how they understand their place in the world.”⁶⁷

Theatre too is a community that constantly reinvents its identity and the relationships between actor and text /spectacle and spectator. Actors strive to create a

67. Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, *Deaf in America: Voices from A Culture*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 121.

vocabulary using a variety of sign systems to express the human condition. They seek to interpret environment and emotion to teach, connect, and inspire the audiences that come to watch them.

This chapter discusses the overlapping histories of the Deaf and Performance communities finding commonalities previously unexamined. Sharing the roles of communicator, educator, and interpreter, both communities struggle with competing sign systems in order to achieve identity and community. Successful communication through language, spoken and signed, is the most valuable asset of both communities. The overlapping sign systems provide an opportunity to reassess the language of the stage as well as highlight the value of Deaf culture.

The next chapter will incorporate these moments of intersection and dialogue between the performance and Deaf communities to create a methodology for interpretation of text in performance.

Chapter Three: Theory

*Why cost not speak to me?
Shall I speak for thee? Shall I say 'tis so?*

--Titus Andronicus

Shakespeare's plays are revered for their aural qualities. Important information about time, place, and character are disseminated not only through the words, but through the sounds of the words at a phonemic level. As John Russell Brown notes, "...an actor will speak a series of varied sounds, linked together so that they hold the attention and draw expectation forward." This combination of text and sound not only informs but also influences an audience's perception of the action and characters. "Audiences will be unaware that this spoken music is influencing their responses because it operates surreptitiously and subliminally alongside the conscious recognition of verbal meanings and physical performance."¹

A Deaf audience needs to *see* the "spoken music" of the text through its interpretation into ASL on the same level a mainstream audience hears it. Creating an interpretation, however, one must take into account not simply the sounds of the text, but the movement/action in performance. In the previous chapter, I discussed the parallel histories of gesture in performance and gesture as a language, examining how gesture contains valuable cultural knowledge. In this chapter, I posit a structure for understanding the interpreting process, its end product, and the process' applicability

1. John Russell Brown, *Shakespeare and the Theatrical Event* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 71.

to text analysis. The objective of my structure is to permit and develop a dialogue between text and sign. I begin with a brief overview of the semiology of theatre and a discussion of the performance gestural systems of the stage; I include a description of the documented system of Francois Delsarte and the applicability of his system in studying gesture -- both past and present. Applying Delsarte's theories to performance gesture and ASL, I demonstrate the use of a combined system in the interpretation of Shakespearean text.

In order to provide the fullest possible depiction of gesture, Shakespeare's text, and ASL, this chapter includes visual renderings (sketches, photographs, and video clips) of the body in action accompanied by an explanation of the gesture/movement/sign. The importance of movement, rhythm and location in the formation of meaning in gesture and ASL is best displayed by the current technology, which permits three-dimensional video over two-dimensional sketches or still photography. In order to access the Quicktime videos in the chapter place the cursor directly over the still photographs and click to play. If you do not have Quicktime or are using a printed copy of this text, the videos will appear as still photographs.

Practicing Theory

Critical analysis of theatre is challenging due to the multi-coded, multilayered semiotic systems that occur during a performance. Various semiotic structures of text, gesture, action, costume, set, light, and sound intersect and work independently but symbiotically create a unified performance. These substructures all function under the superstructure of a director's concept; the director's superstructure is a

method of creating a through line for all the substructures of meaning to intersect in performance. An ASL interpretation, therefore, must work as both a semiotic substructure to create meaning from the text, as well as a part of the conceptual through line of the performance's superstructure as a whole.

Applying a structuralist (Saussurian) approach to the semiology of gesture and ASL translation supports the linguistic connection of sign/text of gesture in performance. Connecting the linguistic structures of physical text (ASL) to spoken text (Shakespeare's words within Saussurian semiology) supports the text and its translation as a cultural artifact that can be studied. The laws uncovered through semiology, circumscribing "a well-defined area within the mass of anthropological facts," would be "specifically applicable to language."² Gesture, however, resides in an ambiguous space because it may be a reference for an object or place, an emotional response, or a result of some greater action done to or by the actor.³

In "Problems of a Semiology of Theatrical Gesture," Patrice Pavis discusses the particular problem of systematizing a successful method of analysis of the body in performance. Pavis claims gesture cannot successfully be broken down into "gestèmes" (the smallest part of gesture) but functions as a part of the "global plan" in order to codify a part of performance. Pavis begins the discussion of text-gesture

2. Ferdinand de Saussure, et al., *Course in General Linguistics*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. W. Baskin (London: Peter Owen Ltd., 1974), 16.

3. Semiosis, the process of signs becoming other signs, is a branch of semiology that also resides in the ambiguous space of semiotic discourse. Gesture and action within a performance are a semiosis of both signs and sign systems, but semioses have yet to be applied to Signed languages as a theoretical lens. For more, see: Winfried Nöth, ed., *Origins of Semiosis: sign evolution in nature and culture* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994).

connections positing that the semiotic discourses of text and performance are not only intertwined but interdependent, as well. The translation of dramatic text into ASL creates a text that is both a part of the “global plan” of the performance and, because it has a defined linguistic structure like a spoken language, can also be broken down into gestèmes to further explore poetics and the performativity of the text itself. Ambiguity occurs within this “global plan” structure when an interpreter attempts to differentiate text performed as gesture (rhetorical) and gesture that supports the text (psychological). Vladimir Krysinsky’s “Semiotic Modalities of the Body in Modern Theatre” highlights the importance of the physical body in performance by attributing power to the actor’s presence on stage, which supports a broader view beyond (or perhaps between) the psychological and the representative gesture. To be sure, understanding the theories of the body on stage is an important part of the paradigm, but working with the practicalities of them has unique challenges.

In order to create a structural analysis to examine the ASL signs so that cultural and textual knowledge both are culled, I begin by choosing a foundational practical technique that both utilizes physical vocabulary and applies gesture as a definitive semiotic system to a performance.

Applying Delsarte

The highly visual culture of the nineteenth century saw an increase of physical expression and gesture in the visual arts, such as sculpture and painting.⁴ Influenced

4. Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Silent Poetry*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 10.

by the presence of gesture in art, as well as the presentational acting style of the previous century, Francois Delsarte sought a codified gestural system that was embedded into text and could work seamlessly and simultaneously within performance. To that end, he created a practical aspect on the theories of staging and performance through the process of experimentation with use of physical gesture. Delsarte understood the importance of a gestural system that was codified both as a self-contained discourse, as well as a useful tool to support subtext or add psychological information to a textual moment. By developing a system to understand the significance of specific movements of the body - how gesture can *contribute* to the text and how gesture *is* a text - Delsarte provides a perspective of gesture and performance that encapsulates both the rhetorical gesture of Elizabethan acting and the unique experience of an ASL interpretation.

Delsarte never published his own findings. His work was documented in personal journals and through the experiential learning of his students who went on to publish his thoughts in their theories. His writings, archived at Louisiana State University, were the subject of several Masters Theses from 1942 to 1945.⁵ These papers focused on the Delsarte School practices through the aforementioned journals and personal correspondence with his students, both of which contain notes for Delsarte's system and its dissemination in America.

5. Converted to microfilm, they are available in the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge, La. For a brief summary of the theses, see: Ted Shawn, *Every Little Movement*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Dance Horizons, Inc., 1974), 118-122.

Throughout his life, Delsarte sought to create a performance style that combined the vocal, the physical, and the emotional through observation and self-awareness. As a result, he developed the “Cours d’Esthétique Appliquée,” the science of applied aesthetics. Delsarte based his aesthetic principles on the three great Orders of Movement: Oppositions, Parallelisms, and Successions.⁶ Gesture functioning within this trinity, as Delsarte affirmed, “. . . must be considered in relation to its rhythm, its nature, and its form.”⁷ The detailed analysis of a single gesture would, according to Delsarte’s notes require “a volume,” and perhaps is why the “Delsarte system seems to over-emphasize the matter of gesture.”⁸ In order to be a successful system pedagogically, Delsarte’s trinity was subdivided into nine rules that became the “Nine Laws of Motion.”

According to Delsarte, the science of applied aesthetics has the basic principles that could be applied to any art.⁹ Delsarte’s system, in seeking a connection between text and movement, created a basis for ASL interpreting stating:

Artistic gesture is the expression of the physiognomy; it is transluminous action; it is the mirror of lasting things. . . . Gesture is the direct agent of the heart. It is the fit manifestation of feeling. It is the revealer of thought and commentator upon speech. It is the elliptical expression of language: it is the

6. Delsarte’s theories, due in part to his strong religious perspective, were developed in “trinities” (World of Ideas/principles/heavenly qualities). This paper uses the charting of the trinities into “laws” as its foundation for movement analysis for aesthetic ASL.

7. George Albert Neely, “The School of Delsarte: Based on an Original Notebook” (master’s thesis, Louisiana State University, 1942), 50.

8. Ibid., 49.

9. Shawn, *Every Little Movement*, 17.

justification of the additional meanings of speech. It is the spirit of which speech is merely the letter.¹⁰

Delsarte, of course, was concerned with the role of gesture in enhancing spoken language discourse. Expanding the concept of the elliptical expression of language, the gestures and signs of an ASL translation similarly can reveal meaning in the spoken text that cannot be understood if a translation only is read or seen on a page.

An ASL translation can also be applied to Delsarte's theories of movement and gesture. ASL contains the iconic signs, abstract signs, referents, facial expression as grammar (described as movements, objects and attitudes by Delsarte), and gesture into its linguistic system. Each of Delsarte's Laws of Motion, therefore, can be connected to grammatical features of ASL.¹¹

1. The Law of Altitude:

Positive assertion rises, negative assertion falls: in general, the constructive, positive, good true, beautiful, moves upward, forward and outward—the destructive, negative, ugly, false, moves inward, downward, and backward.

The Law of Altitude is an equivalent to the ASL parameters of Handshape, Location, and Movement as they relate to emotion signs. The concept of “feelings” and “senses” are often signed with accent on the middle finger. The placement of feelings is near the heart; positive feelings are moved upwards, and negative feelings move downwards. Positive and negative affect is mostly conveyed by facial expression.

10. Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, eds., *Actors on Acting - The Theories, Techniques, and Practices of the World's Great Actors, Told in Their Own Words* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1970), 188.

11. The “Nine Laws of Motion” are translated by Shawn in *Every Little Movement*, 148. The ASL grammatical elements are discussed in: Scott K. Liddell, *Grammar, Gesture, and Meaning in American Sign Language* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6-65.

2. The Law of Force:

Conscious strength assumes weak attitudes: conscious weakness assumes strong attitudes.

The Law of Force can be found in the ASL linguistic components of Iconic Gesture and Facial Grammar. Delsarte's Force contrasts psychological awareness of a state with the state's physical manifestation. In order to provide a physical state that conveys both text and subtext it is necessary to gesture by 'force' and display contrasting feeling (subtext) through the lingering body movements and facial expression.

3. The Law of Motion (Expansion and contraction):

Excitement expands motion, thought contracts motion, love and affection moderates attitudes.

The Law of Motion is displayed in the ASL parameter of Movement. One of the parameters in the creation of a sign, movement conveys meanings of duration, strength, and focus.

4. The Law of Sequence:

Let your attitude, gesture, and face foretell what you would make felt. The thought (emotion, feeling, idea) comes first then the expression of the face and attitude of the body, and the gesture is the result of this, only last does speech come.

The Law of Sequence is present within the Non-manual grammatical features of ASL and in the interpreter process. The facial expression conveys grammatical information to signify questions and contributes to prosody. The thought is the message to be conveyed, and the sign is the body's means to convey that message. Delsarte does not address the effect of gesture without speech; he only notes that gesture tends to

precede speech. Gesture and speech may also be simultaneous, although they still follow the initial realization of a thought to be conveyed.

5. The Law of Direction:

Lengths are passionate, heights and depths are intellectual, breadths are volitional. In stage directions these would be directly toward or away from the audience—lengths: from side to side of the stage—breadths: up and down as to elevation from the floor—heights and depths. Diagonals, arrived at by the opposition of two directions have an element of conflict in them.

The Law of Direction is the ASL equivalent to directionality in time and space. In ASL directionality is used to convey time and space using the body as both “present” and “center.” Directionality can also be used to signify contrast or conflict as signs demonstrate the theoretical and abstract concept of conflict spatially.

6. The Law of Form:

Straight form is vital; Circular form is mental; Spiral form is moral/mystic. Circular form is, generally speaking, more pleasing due to its associations with the pleasant feel of round things as against angular objects; and thus, by implication, angular forms are more unpleasant.

The Law of Form is clearly seen in the ASL parameter of Handshape. Handshape may be iconic (a classifier may appear similar to pantomime to describe the size and shape of an object) or used to demonstrate an abstract concept. Creating patterns of handshapes creates a kind of rhyme- a visual poetic device.¹²

7. The Law of Velocity:

The rhythm and tempo of gesture is proportionate to the mass being moved. This law is based on the vibration of the pendulum. Great levers have slow movements; small agents more rapid ones. In proportion to the depth and majesty of the *emotion* is the deliberation and slowness of the *motion*, and vice versa.

12. Discussed in Chapter One - Valli's analysis of ASL poetics and poetry, 12-13.

The Law of Velocity is demonstrated in the ASL parameters of movement and rhythm. The rhythm and tempo of gesture is proportionate to tone and used to emphasize meaning and connection to emotion.

8. The Law of Reaction:

Every object, agreeable or disagreeable, which surprises us, makes the body recoil. The degree of reaction should be proportionate to the degree of emotion cause by the sight of the object. Every extreme of emotion tends its opposite: Concentrated passion tends to explosion, explosion to prostration. Thus the only emotion which does not tend to its own destruction is that which is perfectly moderated, balanced, controlled.

The Law of Reaction connects to the creation of a sign at a formational level. The reasoning or intent behind an expression is a part of the sign on a morphemic level. To form the sign the emotion, and/or conversational intent are integrated into the creation of the sign itself through facial expression and personal movement style of the signer in order to convey a message successfully.

9. The Law of Extension:

The extension of the gesture is in proportion to the surrender of the will in emotion. Extension in space beyond the body may be achieved by an arresting of the body at the culmination of the gesture with held breath.

The Law of Extension is comparable to the register of the discourse, or the relationship dynamics of the conversation. The involvement of the body is related to the relationship of the speaker to the spectator. Formal conversation involves broader signs and stance; by contrast, intimate conversation involves smaller and subtler movement.

Delsarte in America

Delsarte's protégée, Steele Mackaye, intended to bring him to America, "here to continue his work as the founder of a great conservatory of the arts in the new world."¹³ As Delsarte was ill and too poor to make the journey, Mackaye brought Delsarte's theories of movement to the United States. Mackaye presented lectures on the Delsarte theory, initially to raise money to bring support to an ailing Delsarte, to great acclaim creating his own following. He eventually founded a training program that would become the American Academy of Dramatic Art. Mackaye trained statesmen, poets, actors and actresses for the stage and gave public lectures at universities and religious institutions. The success of his students in the burgeoning silent film industry increased the waiting list for his academy tenfold.¹⁴ There is some circumstantial evidence that suggests Deaf students were brought to witness Mackaye's expertise in physical and oral communication. He received at least one letter from "deaf and dumb girl [who] had written on [his] lecture, which she 'saw' at Tremont Temple."¹⁵ His expertise in Delsarte also gained him notoriety as an actor. Mackaye was the first American to play *Hamlet* in London and successfully toured as "...by far the best *Hamlet* of our time."¹⁶

13. Percy Mackaye, *Epoch, The Life of Steele Mackaye* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1968), 142.

14. *Ibid.*, 361.

14. The letter was sent from Professor Alexander Bell and assumed to be written by his future wife, Mabel Hubbard. As discussed in Mackaye, 152.

16. May 10th review from *The Spectator*, as quoted in Mackaye, 198.

As Mackaye's popularity grew the popularity of Delsarte's core principles followed. Unfortunately, this popularity led to Delsarte's core axioms becoming so trendy that anyone who attended a Mackaye lecture assumed an expertise in the Delsarte style. The uneducated actors and teachers lacked an understanding of the basis of the technique and it devolved into "posing," the stylized gesture of emotion that Delsarte himself was trying to avoid when he developed the "Cours d'Esthetique Appliqué."¹⁷

Delsarte "hindered the effectiveness of his teaching by his insistence upon reducing everything to his trinity."¹⁸ This stringent code contributed to misinterpretations of Delsarte's theories, reducing them to stereotypical melodrama. Late nineteenth century advertisements called Delsartean recitative texts a "means of acquiring grace, dignity, and fine bearing for society people."¹⁹

The goals of his lessons were also misinterpreted as they were often divided into separate applications of dance and oratory/voice. With the exception of Delsarte's original journals and two of the Masters Theses from the Louisiana State University, the few materials that are currently available divide Delsarte's technique into either dance/movement theory or elocution. This distinction is inconsistent with his original intent to integrate vocal, gestural, and emotional systems.

Even when the materials are read holistically, it is difficult to analyze and create performance pedagogy of the Delsarte technique. Delsarte's early writings

17. Shawn, *Every Little Movement*, 26.

18. Neely, v.

19. Colbey and Chinoy, 187.

were not meant for publication and the two-dimensional charts with geometric shapes meant to represent physical actions are difficult to interpret. By returning to the core axioms of Delsarte's theory and connecting and applying it to ASL signs and interpreting, a physical opportunity arises to rediscover aspects of Delsarte's original technique and reintroduce it as an approach to character and textual analysis.

Delsarte in the Deaf Community

The practical application of Delsarte's work has not been lost on the Deaf community. In 1991, Luanne Davis, the Artistic Director of the Interborough Repertory Company and Associate Professor of Cultural and Creative Studies at the Rochester Institute of Technology, began creating what she calls the "Del-Sign" technique for her students. Davis's goals for the project are three-fold:

- To enhance an individual's acting technique by building a physical vocabulary.
- To train a new generation of actors grounded in a technique that encourages the bridging of cultures.
- To unite actors and audience, both Deaf and hearing, in a common cathartic experience that goes beyond the spoken word.²⁰

Davis describes her technique as a fusion of Delsarte theory and ASL, which creates a kind of "performance ethnography."²¹ She applied the Del-Sign theory to three

20. Luane Davis Haggerty, "Del-Sign: a physical approach to performance," Rochester Institute of Technology, http://people.rit.edu/lrdnpa/del_sign.htm (accessed June 23, 2007).

21. Luane Davis Haggerty, "Adjusting The Margins: Building Bridges Between Deaf and Hearing Cultures Through Performance Arts," (PhD diss., Antioch University, 2006), abstract in "Ohiolink ETD," http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd/view.cgi?acc_num=antioch1166037841 (accessed May 5, 2008).

Shakespeare plays: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Tempest*.

Each role was double cast with one speaking actor and one signing actor in an attempt to avoid privileging either the words or the movement as the dominant sign system in performance. Splitting the character in two, however, does present a challenge to the spectator. The double casting forced moments when a choice had to be made between form and content for each half of a character, the speaker and the signer. For example, in the portrayal of the character Caliban in *The Tempest*, the emotional content is bound to the form of the text. Neither actor portraying Caliban is permitted to transcend the text to achieve complete characterization through emotion and physicality. Trying to split the focus between two actors is problematic both conceptually and for the attention span of an audience.

The divide between an emotive gesture and an ASL translation often hinders the narrative in a story-telling process. For the Del-Sign project, the challenge of narrative versus physicality became evident with the performance of Feydeau's *A Flea in her Ear*. As Davis stated, "farce isn't a good foil for the depth of Del-Sign."²² Farce, containing both great physicality and great wit, should be an ideal way to experiment with an overlapping textual and gestural discourse. Perhaps the limited understanding of Delsarte's movement codes, filtered through centuries of historical misinterpretations, constrained the physical vocabulary available to the actors. By favoring the Americanized Delsarte codes, Davis provides no context for the

22. Ibid.

gesticular movement to the audience, which interferes with the world of the play's performance.²³

Unlike the shared stage experience of two actors, one speaking and one signing, in a Luanne Davis production using Del-sign technique, most interpreters are required to negotiate the boundaries between spectator and performer. The boundaries do not require, however, that an interpreter's function is only that of a caption for the Deaf audience experience. Such a limited role would circumscribe the value of the interpreter's body in the theatrical space. The interpreter holds a unique place in performance as a spectator/listener during a simultaneous interpreting. Although a certain amount of objectivity is required to avoid interfering with the integrity of the production, an interpreter's job is to integrate meta-theatrical moments with textual interpretation to interpret effectively into multi-layered signs (of ASL) of a theatrical performance to a targeted audience.²⁴

Delsarte, Gesture, and ASL Interpretation

I submit that the combination of Delsarte's system, ASL linguistics, and rhetorical gesture will serve as the basis for developing a process for the successful ASL interpretation of Shakespearean text. The translation product then becomes a

23. In this context "Americanized" refers to the reduction of Delsarte's technique to two-dimensional tableau and caricature.

24. Meta theatrical moments occur because of the interpreter's place "in-between" spectator and spectacle. Occasionally the interpreter is commenting on the production as opposed to blending into a production.

tool to explore elemental aspects of rhetorical gesture and Delsarte's techniques in practice. Remaining gesture and physicalization as a systemic textual analysis for an actor as well as provide a historical context that is simultaneously textual for a Deaf audience.

As discussed in Chapter One, John Bulwer's chirologia charted hand gestures as a "universal language of expression."²⁵ Delsarte's approach to gesture as communication also started in a codification of hand movement.

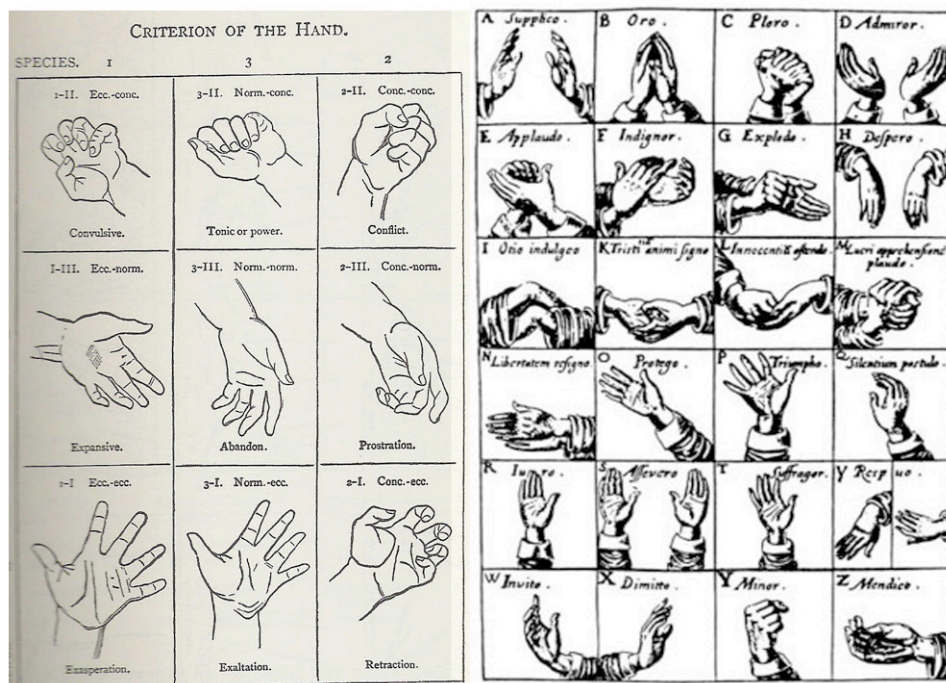


Figure 3.1 Delsarte's Hand Gestures from *The Delsarte Method* and John Bulwer's *Chirologia*

Each of these depictions of hand gesture introduces the basic movements of the hand as having significant meaning. Distinguishing the full and contextual meaning however is virtually impossible without the rest of the physical information (facial, expression, movement pattern of the hands). In order to explore the most

25. James W. Cleary, ed., introduction to *Chirologia: or the Natural Language of the Hand and Chironomia: or the Art of Manual Rhetoric*, by John Bulwer (IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974), xxxiii.

effective process of understanding gesture as text the rendering must depict the gesture as “all the physical agents, all parts of the body, the most subtle of all being the eye and the mouth.”²⁶

The Process

The ASL translation process is realized by starting with a sketch from the Delsarte Method. Written in 1895 to provide dramatic prose and appropriate acting tools for salons, The Delsarte Method includes sketches of appropriate gestures to use in performance. One such sketch portrays the gesture of “Defiance.”²⁷



Figure 3.2 “Defiance” from *The Delsarte Method*

26. Henry Davenport Northrop, ed., *The Delsarte Method* (Chicago: Monroe Book Company, 1895), 12.

27. Ibid.

The gesture in Figure 3.2 is classified as “defiant” based on several physical factors. The “defiant one” displays clenched fists on fully extended arms, a wide stance, and a stern facial expression (furrowed brow and pursed lips). The sketch, however, does not give a complete physical explanation of the action of the gesture or provide any contextual information. It is an acceptable representation of a generally defiant person. The gesture as a mimetic representation of defiance is not bound by the temporality of a single performance.



Figure 3.3 *The Taming of the Shrew*, University of Maryland College Park 2005

A photograph provides more contextual information to the gesture than a sketch.²⁸ Figure 3.3 shows a more focused defiance in a particular context, thus providing more information about the formation of the gesture and the emotional and/or textual motivation. Like the Figure 3.2, the fists are clenched from fully extended arms and the stance is wide and open, but the tension from the emotional

28. Photograph used with permission of Stan Barouh photography.

state is clearer in the photograph: this is defiance in pursuit of someone or something specific.

In order to closely examine the gesture and its self-contained structure, I remove the context of a performance from the physical sign. Removing the signifiers of performance (i.e., the context of the performance as in the photograph), I move the focus of the gesture from the performance to the formation of the gesture using the tools of ASL phonology and morphology. Phonology is a distinctive term for the phonemes (sounds) of a spoken language. ASL has equivalent phonemes in the formation of a sign, as I have previously discussed as “parameters,” that when combined have the equivalent morpheme value.²⁹

The opportunity to understand a gesture as its own entity, as opposed to an element of ASL, allows for a three-dimensional close reading of text. In Figure 3.4, I demonstrate a possible connection between a gesture of defiance and an ASL sign of REFUSE. There is no documented definitive etymological history for the development of specific signs in American Sign Language. I suggest a gestural connection between DEFIANCE and REFUSE based on the similarities of handshape and movement parameters and apply a theoretical linguistic classification.³⁰

29. Robbin M. Battison, “American Sign Language Linguistics 1970-1980: Memoir of a Renaissance,” in *The Signs of Language Revisited : An Anthology in Honor of Ursula Bellugi and Edward Klima*, Karen Emmorey and Harlan L. Lane, eds. (New York: Taylor and Francis, Inc., 2000), 41.

30. Ibid. 220.



Figure 3.4 DEFIANCE and REFUSE

In the video, the environment provides no context; only the action of the gesture provides meaning. The first gesture shows a moderate amount of force in a downward direction through an extension of the arms. The fists start in a clenched position obviating the need to establish further tension. As the gesture becomes sign, more context is required. The addition of the head turn adds a focal point for the defiance. A lack of eye contact demonstrates disengagement from the object, which connects to the arms and hands shifting to an upward direction. The shift is done for two reasons: First, ease of signing often means that the location of signs remains within the space of the head and torso. Connecting the strong arm gesture with the head gesture requires them to be in the same field of vision. Second, the directional shift adds to the linguistic context by establishing a boundary of meaning to a particular kind of defiance - a refusal to engage as opposed to defiance in pursuit. All of this meaning must be conveyed within the parameters of ASL without a textual

context. In this way, a dialogue has been created between the ASL linguistic context, the gestural discourse, and the text of Shakespeare; these seemingly separate structures intersect and create moments of performance that may be a useful lens for textual analysis.

Using the text of *Romeo and Juliet* and focusing specifically on the character development of Juliet, I offer a translation of portions of her text and an analysis of the process of interpretation. The process, in particular, enables a close reading of the character and provides insight to gesture and movement possibilities that are inherent to Shakespeare's text.³¹ The connection to Delsarte, though not the focus of this particular section, is present in the performance of the translation itself. Delsarte's goal was to create a system that used the body as an emotional sign system in support of spoken or sung text. In ASL translation the gesture is the text and simultaneity of emotion, movement, and text is possible resulting in an interpretation that is accessible to both Deaf and Hearing audiences.

Harold Bloom questions modern critics of this play, noting "the tragedy more frequently is surrendered to commissars of gender and power, who can thrash the patriarchy, including Shakespeare himself, for victimizing Juliet."³² Obviously, both gender and power have their places in critical analysis of the play. An ASL interpreter however, begins her analysis with the smallest pieces of the puzzle – the

31. The third Arden edition of *Romeo and Juliet* is used for all textual references here. Not wishing to be both interpreter and editor, I follow the editing choices of the Arden publishers. The ASL interpretation is my own. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Brian Gibbons, ed. (London: Arden Shakespeare 3rd ed., 2004).

32. Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999), 87.

words and themes. Without a director's "concept" of performance, an interpreter commences with the textual themes and images to begin making sign choices that are appropriate to the play. In the case of Juliet's character, I decided to focus on the axes of time.

"The excitement of dramatic art lies very largely in the tension thus established between chronological tempo and artistic, or dramatic, tempo."³³ The connections between time and love are consistent throughout the play. Romeo wanders lovelorn at dawn. Later, the day "is hot" which establishes a Shakespearean "High Noon" before the swords are drawn. The speed of love is both an emotional state and a physical state in the fleeting time before tragedy strikes. The convention of time is signified and expanded by the architecture of the theatre. The roundness of the Globe is an outer reflection time (the turning of the globe on its axis) and holds time on its stage. The Blackfriars Theatre's, of the ASC, indoor thrust and the audience's close proximity to the action creates an "in the round" atmosphere where the audience participates in and controls the time through interacting and responding to events on stage. The "two-hours traffic" of the performance itself is a textual warning that things happen quickly in this world on stage. The interplay of time passing with Juliet as the sun - when to take time, how it slows to the speed of a sonnet with love, and when there is no control over time because tempers are quick and fate is fleeting - present both conscious and subconscious dramatic moments for the audience.

33. Tom F. Driver, "The Shakespearian Clock: Time and the Vision of Reality in *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Tempest*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (Autumn, 1964): 363-370.

The translation process of Juliet's character begins with the various ways that time is represented in ASL. There are three axes of time in ASL: (1) the horizon line, (2) the timeline of past to future, and (3) the iconic signs of a clock face or a watch to signify hours of the day. Figure 3.5 demonstrates time references from the horizon (day and night); the horizon line also is the foundation for sunrise and sunset. The introductory sign for TIME in this video signifies a period of time, or time as a concept.

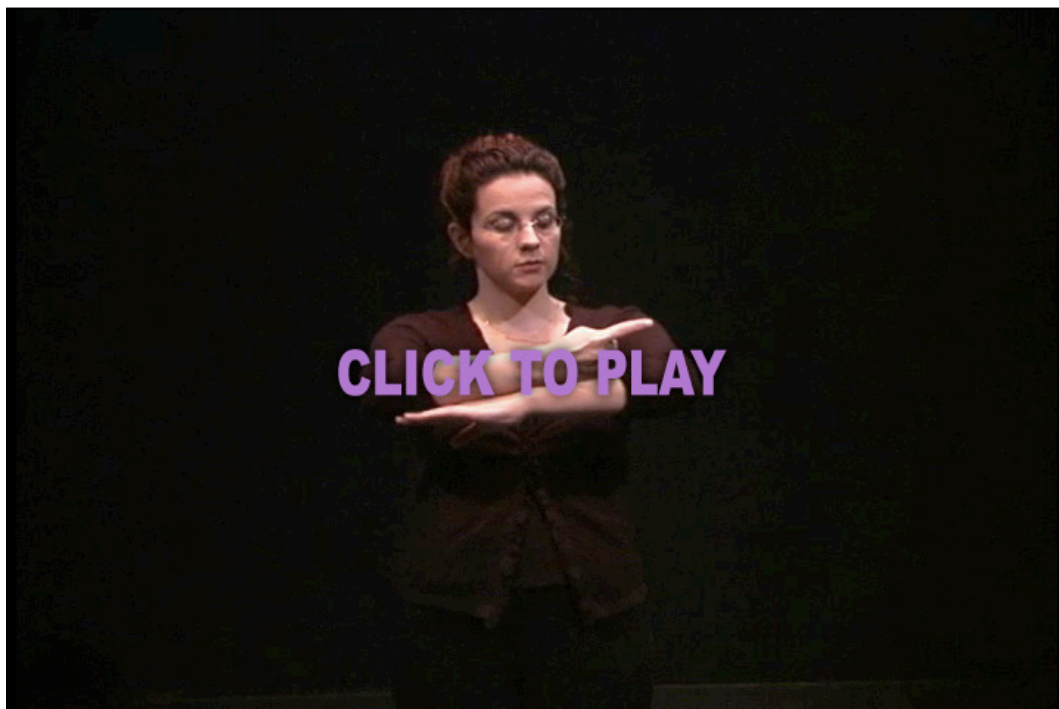


Figure 3.5 Horizon Line

Figure 3.6 demonstrates the second axes of time with signs related to the past, present, and future. The timeline of history in ASL places the body in the present moment. The immediacy of the time reference is directly related to how close the sign is to the body, i.e., the closer to the body the sign is made, the more immediate the reference. It is also important to mention the importance of facial grammar, i.e.,

facial expressions, to display immediacy and tone. The sign for TIME in this video is the iconic sign relating the hour of the day.³⁴



Figure 3.6 Timeline

Using the axes of time as a foundation for Juliet's transition through love physicalized the character development for an actor and made the narrative three-dimensional for a spectator. Figures 3.7-3.10 provide lines from Juliet's soliloquies and demonstrate her character development through the physicality of the translation. The process of translating this text to ASL is similar to translating written English into written Russian or any foreign language. The interpretation is not influenced by visual information provided by design, costume, or director's staging. The translations are based upon the information that is found exclusively in the text. The

34. In Shakespeare translation this iconic sign is not textually appropriate as it uses a modern referent (wristwatch).

three-dimensionality of the ASL and the process of creating this kind of translation offer a physical approach to a close reading of Shakespeare's texts. In this way, I believe the translation process creates an intersection between the traditional concept of close reading in English departments and performance in Theatre departments. The first video (Figure 3.8) related to this section is of the Balcony scene. I interpret Juliet's lines:

Good Night, Good Night, Parting is such sweet sorrow,
That I shall say good night til it be morrow.³⁵



Figure 3.7 Juliet: act 2, scene 2

Juliet's first steps towards love are at a moderate pace. Although Romeo and Juliet discovered love in a brief moment, as textually demonstrated by the sonnet, at this moment in the play (as depicted in the video) she remains within a day and thus

35. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, act 2, scene 2, 184–185.

can keep her bearings, i.e. her own horizon line. I suggest that the sonnet serves two purposes aurally. First, to subconsciously inform the audience they are the perfect couple through the formation of the perfect textual form. Second, the formation of the sonnet presents a kind of slow motion “love at first sight.” Gayle Whittier, in her article “The Sonnet’s Body and the Body Sonnetized in *Romeo and Juliet*,” structures the entire play on the sonnet while focusing on Romeo’s control (or lack thereof) of language.³⁶ The translation I developed focuses on Juliet’s control over time, illustrated by her control over language. It is a brief moment that is textually parsed for the audiences’ ears. An ASL translation of that moment would require a parallel form to create a visual version of this subconscious information.

The signs that demonstrate this moment are based on the modifications of a single hand shape (the flat and curved hand) and are held by the location of the horizon line. The fact that the young couple can have “no satisfaction tonight” is conveyed by my illustrating that Juliet’s desires have not yet escaped the confines of her world which is held by her own horizon. The hope of continuing towards love is conveyed by the rhythm and shape of the last sign of the sun rising with Juliet’s focus on the rise of the sun and not the border of the horizon. The other important non-manual sign for this video translates the “sweet sorrow” in the slow paced of the sign formation movement and the facial expression of sadness.

Figures 3.8 and 3.9 provide translations of the following lines:

The clock struck nine when I did send the nurse,
In half an hour she promised to return.³⁷

36. Gayle Whittier, “The Sonnet’s Body and the Body Sonnetized in *Romeo and Juliet*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (Spring 1989), 28.

In both translations, I struggle with the iconic signs of the clock striking nine. For example, referring to the time of nine o'clock would traditionally refer to a watch simultaneously showing the number nine. An appropriate translation of what Juliet is actually saying, however, would not involve referencing her watch. With this challenge in mind I identified my two options, as shown in the following videos:

The translation in Figure 3.8 uses Juliet's body as the center of her own timepiece. The nurse is sent from her and the shape of her arms and hands becomes the time of nine o'clock. Juliet's frustration at the nurse's failure to return promptly is physically shown with the drop of her arm to symbolize the thirty minutes that should have elapsed quickly and the nurse returned.

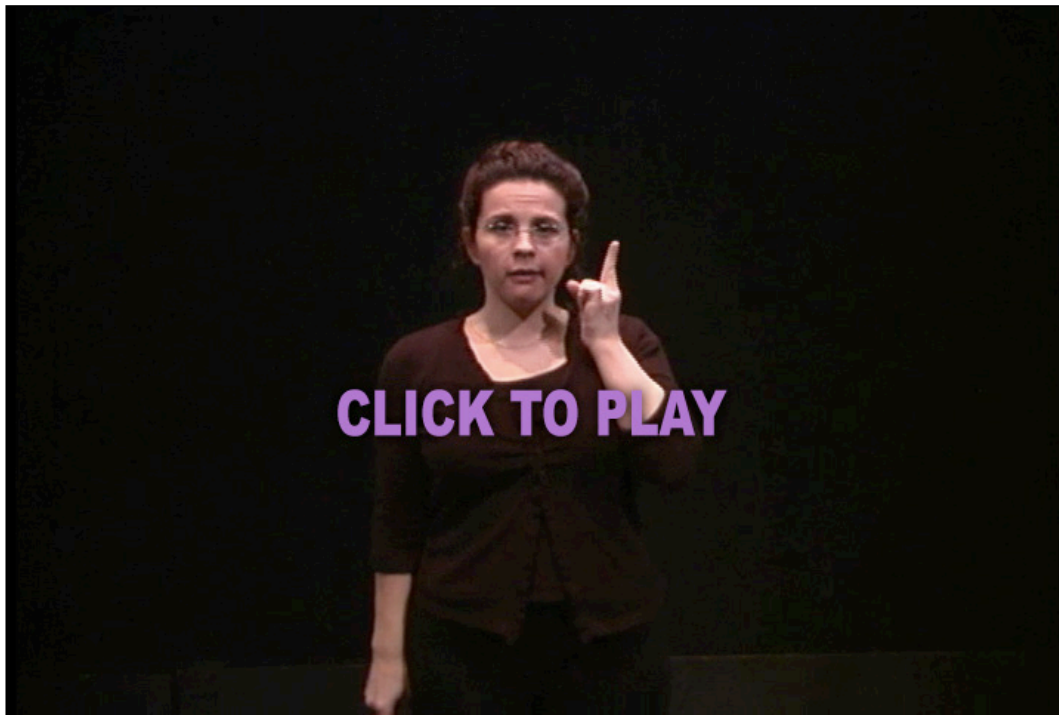


Figure 3.8 Juliet: act 2 scene 5

Figure 3.9 is a slightly less aesthetic choice to show the meaning of the line. Still avoiding the iconic watch symbol to signify time, I use the fact that Juliet orders the nurse to return at “nine bells.” Juliet’s frustration is demonstrated in the “loud” signing of the time ending in nine.



Figure 3.9 Juliet: act 2 scene 5 - option #2

Within Juliet’s world, as contained by the axes of time, her soliloquy illustrates her developing awareness of time, self, and action. Every hour is important, as is the speed of time. The increasing speed of time is also a narrative device, driving the plot (and tragedy) to its inevitable end. "It rushes headlong, with only momentary pauses through love, courtship, and marriage..."³⁸ Now, Juliet is no longer signing within the moderate space of the horizon. The objects of her world, as shown through the hand shapes for time and for the nurse, are either very distant or

38. Driver, “The Shakespearian Clock,” 363-370.

very near. Juliet's changing relationship to time is physically represented by the translation's location shift from the horizon line to the more present moment-to-moment iconicity of time.

The final transition of Juliet's place in the fantasy world of time/space through text is demonstrated in Figure 3.10.³⁹ Like the previous soliloquy, Juliet is in a holding pattern, a place of waiting in time. As she asks for both night and Romeo (love), Juliet claims agency of time and love by placing herself into her world and destiny. The lines translated in this clip are:

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phoebus' lodging: such a wagoner
As Phaëthon would whip you to the west,
And bring in cloudy night immediately.⁴⁰

39. As opposed to Juliet's transition through action—this would be her death. The death in the context of the imagined world is real and the interpretation of the death in ASL would be descriptive as opposed to in performance, which would be representative.

40. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, act 3, scene 2, 1-4.

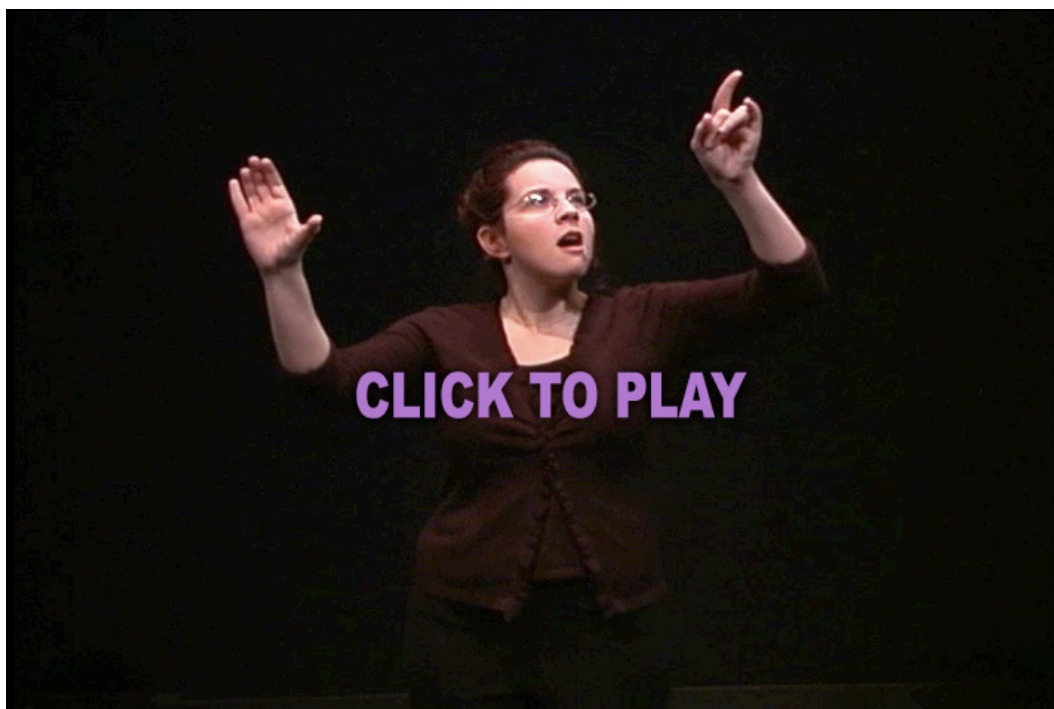


Figure 3.10 Juliet: act 3 scene 2

The axes of time combine in this moment. Juliet is actively aware of her state of waiting; she comprehends the limits of the horizon and sunset. In embodying the text, Juliet physically represents herself as time and moves it by pulling down the sun and bringing on night. Juliet has once again shifted from the center of a moment, which she illustrated by being the center of the clock or clapper of the bell, to the center of her world by being aware and becoming a part of her place in the narrative of time itself.

Conclusion

Bringing together natural gesture, iconic sign, and ASL linguistics to the text of a play creates an intersection where both a performative and a textual reading of a play can be accomplished. When full translations of a play are documented, they

open the text to a new audience and provide an inner textual logic that can be explored through the translation's three-dimensional presentation. While the lack of context is useful for theoretical questions, from a practical perspective, plays, especially those by Shakespeare, are performed with simultaneous codes of meaning. All of these challenges can be further explored and discussed through the practicalities of interpreting a particular performance.

In the following chapter, I apply the aforementioned translation processes in a specific environment, an ASC production for a Deaf audience. In exploring a systematic way to explore elements of original staging practice, modern audiences, and ASL translation I "recognize that learning a language is not just a matter of knowing the words; it is also a matter of learning the grammar, syntax, and in theatre, the ways in which space give meaning to text."⁴¹ Along with the specific needs of the translation process, I discuss and analyze the additional requirements that a live performance adds to the interpreting process in order to support access for actor and audience, Deaf and Hearing.

41. Franklin J. Hildy, "Why Elizabethan spaces?" in *Elizabethan Performance in North American Spaces: Theatre Symposium 12*, ed. Susan Kattwinkel (Tuscaloosa, AL: Southeastern Theatre Conference and the University of Alabama Press, 2004), 117.

Chapter Four: Practice

Give me your hands if we be friends...

--A Midsummer Night's Dream

As if the amount of material on the convergence of American Sign Language and theatre studies was not a small enough field, the number of works written on the topic of interpretation *in* performance is even smaller. Just as actors do not document how a role is performed every night, moment by moment; interpreters do not document an interpretation of a performance, sign by sign.

This chapter begins by distinguishing between a Deaf theatre experience and an interpreted production. The process of interpreting is then introduced followed by the specific challenges of interpreting in the Blackfriars Playhouse, Staunton, Virginia. In order to engage the theory and history as presented in this dissertation into practice, I document two Shakespeare productions that I interpreted in this space, placing myself in the role of participant-observer. I provide a discussion of my personal perceptions and observations of the events related to the performance and of my participation as an interpreter translating the texts for performance.¹

1. Although not an ethnographic study, the theoretical issues of the interpreter in the unique role of both spectator and spectacle require an acknowledgement. I, as the interpreter am responsible for the translation itself and note the change in the performance as an observer, but cannot appropriately comment of the Deaf experience.

A Deaf Theatre Experience

As previously mentioned the documentation of Deaf theatre productions is rare. The most successful example of a fully documented Shakespeare production in ASL is Peter Novak's ASL Shakespeare Project. The Project created a Deaf Theatre experience for a blended audience of Deaf and Hearing spectators.² The use of Deaf actors in major roles with other characters providing a voice from the stage often created a kind of dance-theatre experience. As theatre critic Douglas J Keating states, "...the combination of signing, body language and facial expression gives the characters a physicality and presence you don't often find in a standard production."³ The choreography of the signing actors was supported by the music of the spoken text. In order to integrate this kind of production, Novak had to create a clear translation for the actors.

Peter Novak's translation of *Twelfth Night* was dependant on predetermined staging decisions that he, as a director, made before establishing a translation team of Deaf and Hearing translators. A translation of a script for performance, not a translation for a Deaf reader, was Novak's vision of *Twelfth Night*. A staging concept for production therefore, was necessary for the translation team, as ASL is a highly contextual language. The translators needed to define where on stage Olivia and

2. Novak's project is discussed at length in the first chapter of this dissertation. For further reference, visit: ASL Shakespeare Project, "Main," University of San Francisco, <http://www.aslshakespeare.com> (accessed April 19, 2008).

3. Douglas J. Keating, review of *Twelfth Night*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Peter Novak, ASL Shakespeare Project, Philadelphia, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 23, 2000.

Orsino “lived” in order for certain referents to work. When a character mentioned Olivia, s\he referred Stage Right, as that was established as the direction of her home. References to Orsino, therefore were made indicating Stage Left. Another staging issue was the imprisonment of Malvolio. The actor was placed under a trap door with only his hands visible. He was trapped, but “heard.” After editing the script for production, Novak and his team took 18 months to translate the text line by line.

Although the CD-ROM of the translators' text is unavailable to the public, a recording of the production is available on DVD.⁴ My analysis, therefore, had to take into account all aspects of performance and could not be solely textual. When I reviewed the performance from the perspective of an interpretation of Shakespeare's text, the challenge of seamlessly integrating overlapping sign systems became clear in certain moments. For example, in the production, ASL as the lone signifying system only was present in the character of Feste, portrayed by Peter Cook - a Deaf poet and storyteller. Cook was the only actor who had moments without spoken English. The voiced English for the character of Feste included the emotive qualities for the actor. The emotive qualities voiced included laughter, sighs, and tears, which is an oddly detached depiction of character. The actor's emotionality was as representational as the signed text. The focus of the production was based so heavily on the translation of the text, that though the *text* was literally accessible (English to ASL), the *production* was not accessible through any other sign systems (lights, set, costume, acting, etc.).

4. *William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night*, DVD, ASL Shakespeare Project, directed by Peter Novak (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2006).

Unlike the long-term team translation of the text utilized by Novak, the theatre department of Gallaudet University, the world renowned Deaf University in Washington DC, provides another type of Deaf theatre experience. This is one that is created and performed within the Deaf world.

In 1963, Gallaudet produced a short version of Shakespeare's *Othello*.⁵ The ensemble of actors created their own translations for individual characters. In this production, staging was greatly influenced by sign choices, particularly the death scenes. The production highlighted the poetics of the signed language and the themes of an outsider being thwarted by a society that does not understand him. The Gallaudet production choices were influenced by the composition of the known, predominantly Deaf audience, unlike an interpreted production, in which the ratio of Deaf to hearing patrons is unknown. Intended for a Deaf audience, the voice interpretation was provided by off-stage interpreters. The production also boasted a number of performers who would go on to be involved with the National Theatre of the Deaf and other arts organizations.

Interpreting

In 1964, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) was started as a professional organization for sign language interpreters. At the time, the National Association of the Deaf stated, "At present we have at least four minimum

5. William Shakespeare, *Silent Voice: Othello*, 8mm film, Gallaudet University, (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Archives, Collection of Hughes Memorial Theatre, 1963), Call Number: Deaf Film 18-12.

requirements with regard to interpreters. They are: they must be able to hear; they must be able to sign; they must be willing; and they must be available.”⁶

The RID "raised interpreting from an informal activity to a professional service by establishing a code of ethics, providing a forum for interpreter interactions, [and] publishing."⁷ Publications include the journal of interpreting and monthly newsletters that discuss various topics regarding rights of interpreters.

Initially, interpreting was not considered a profession, but was done as a favor by a volunteer or family member. It was not until the RID was established that formal rules for payment and recognition as a profession evolved. As a profession, specialty skills emerged including: medical, legal, educational, and performing arts interpreting. Specialty certifications were offered in both Legal and Performing Arts fields. In 1979, the Performing Arts Certification was eliminated.

Theatrical interpreters, therefore, have had little foundational information or any formal interpreting model. Most theatre interpreters learn skills on-the-job in apprentice-like situations, which are far from ideal for interpreter, theatre, or audience. In an ideal working situation, a Sign Master (a member of the Deaf community who is well versed in theatre) and two interpreters (RID members who are well versed in theatre) will have rehearsal time to work as a team to develop an artistically successful interpretation. This is rarely the case. Often environmental

6. F.C. Shreiber, "Recruitment of Interpreters by and for the Deaf," in *A Rose for Tomorrow*, J.D. Schein, ed. (Silver Spring, MD: National Association for the Deaf, 1981), 50.

7. David A. Stewart, Jerome D. Shein, and Brenda E. Cartwright, *Sign Language Interpreting: Exploring Its Art and Science* 2nd ed. (MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2004), 17.

factors and limitations imposed by the play, theatre, or general situation will effect the interpretation. Julie Gebron, author of the only book on theatrical interpreting, describes a theatrical interpreter as one who is "there to provide the best possible performance, giving the maximum amount of access under the limitations placed upon you by the theatre."⁸

Interpreting at the American Shakespeare Center

The scholarly fields of performance theory, Shakespeare Studies, Disability/Deaf studies, Performance Studies, and ASL interpreting integrated during the interpreted performance of two productions – *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* – which were both performed at the ASC for the students and staff of the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind. These interpreted performances demonstrate how these five apparently unassociated fields came together to provide an intersecting discourse, which has both theoretical and practical applications.

According to its website:

The American Shakespeare Center -- through its performances, theatres, exhibitions, and educational programs -- seeks to make Shakespeare, the joys of theatre and language, and the communal experience of the Renaissance stage accessible to all. By re-creating Renaissance conditions of performance, the ASC explores its repertory of plays for a better understanding of these great works and of the human theatrical enterprise past, present, and future.⁹

8. Julie Gebron, *Sign the Speech: An Introduction to Theatrical Interpreting*, (OR: Butte Publications, 1996), 3.

9. "About Us," American Shakespeare Center, <http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com/about-us/> (accessed April 30, 2008).

In 2007, the American Shakespeare Center (ASC) opened a dialogue with the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind (VSDB).¹⁰ The immediate goal was to create an accessible performance for Deaf students, teachers, and staff. The long-term goal was to develop a relationship with the large Deaf community in the Staunton, Virginia area and craft a national model to provide access for the Deaf community to performances of Shakespeare. Often it is important to establish the relationship between the interpreters and the audience well in advance of the performance. The first step with VSDB was allaying their concerns with the background, skill and personality of the interpreters. The next step was access for the Deaf community to a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by providing interpreters for the small group of Deaf students and staff who attended. After the performance, members of the theatre company, the teachers and staff of VSDB, and the performance interpreters (myself and one provided by the school) got together to discuss and evaluate how we did in our first offering of an accessible stage performance for a Deaf audience - placement of interpreters, access to the show, and integrating the productions into the curriculum.

The VSDB performances were not intended to create a documented translation for the students to review, but to provide an interpretation of the text in performance. In particular, our intention was to incorporate a text analysis-based

10. One of the oldest schools in Virginia and the second of its kind in the world, the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind (VSDB), located in historic and scenic Staunton, VA, was established by an act of the Virginia General Assembly on March 31, 1838. Information on the school is available online: Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind, "Main," www.vsdb.virginia.gov (accessed October 27, 2008).

interpretation within the established constraints of staging conditions and actors' characterizations to create a seamless performance experience for all audiences.

Unique Challenges of the Blackfriars Playhouse

In September 2001, The Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, VA "opened its doors to a paying audience for the first time."¹¹ As an article in *Architecture Week* noted, architect Tom McLaughlin, AIA,

Pursued his own studies of Elizabethan interiors. He visited surviving Tudor structures such as Middle Temple Hall..., [studied] the work of Inigo Jones, ...[and] he conducted archival research at the Folger Library. He has designed an apparently accurate reconstruction of the old theater within a modern building. In a departure from Shakespeare's own venue, this Blackfriars has support spaces, such as dressing rooms and rehearsal halls, and modern lobbies with an elevator and other features required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.¹²

The finished two story theatre seats 300 patrons on cushioned benches at ground level and two gallery levels. The stage is an Elizabethan style thrust with two doors for entrances and exits and a discovery space. There are also two small staircases on either side of the stage for access to the stage from the audience. The playing space includes 12 stools for patrons to sit on either side of the stage during performance.

The structure of the playhouse is used to support the ASC's "Renaissance staging" (their term for incorporating elements of "original staging practices"). As

11. Paul Menzer. ed., *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage* (PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 15.

12. Wiliam Lebovich. "Blackfriars Shakespearean Playhouse," *Architecture Week.com*, November 7, 2001, under "News," http://www.ArchitectureWeek.com/2001/1107/news_1-1.html (accessed February 1, 2009)

discussed in Chapter One, some of the key aspects of an ASC production are: Universal lighting, actor /audience relationship, making set and costume choices based on the textual clues, musical interludes, and attempting to keep the length of performance with in the "two hours traffic" Shakespeare writes of in Romeo and Juliet.¹³

This performance to be interpreted was edited, rehearsed, and “set” before the interpreters were incorporated, which means an edited text was provided to the interpreters in advance. The interpreters must be provided with the script for the specific production in order to match the interpretation to the action as every production makes edits to the text based on a variety of factors (number of actors, run time considerations, confusing textual references). For the ASC, however, several other practical considerations had to be addressed: the actors’ staging, the interpreters’ placement and staging, and the curriculum needs of VSDB.

The placement of the interpreters and the audience is especially important in the Blackfriars Playhouse because it is an original staging practices theatre. In addition, we must consider that the audience’s awareness of the actors and interpreters influences the staging and sign choices of the interpreters. In addition, the interpreters must prepare for their work by attending rehearsals or non-interpreted performances, deciding on placement, and assigning roles to each other. After those practical tasks are completed, the text analysis is ready to begin.

13. Ralph Alan Cohen, “What We Do,” American Shakespeare Center, <http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com/v.php?pg=49> (accessed February 1, 2009).

The choice of *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* (MSND) and *Romeo and Juliet* as the texts for the interpreted performances was based on English curriculum needs of the VSDB students and the visual aspects of performance. The long history of a troubled relationship between Deaf students and English coursework makes the inclusion of Shakespeare's plays in the English curriculum a particular challenge. The dependence on the aural poetics of the text often confounds even a general audience. A Deaf audience has the additional need to comprehend the action on the stage in order to comprehend the narrative. Providing Deaf students with the opportunity to see a performance of Shakespeare plays accompanied by an ASL interpretation of the text was the strategy to provide Deaf students with an accessible version of the plays.

The visual nature of fairies, comedic mechanicals, and sword fights, and teens in love were also powerful tools for teaching the students to understand the connection between text and action. The visual nature of Deaf culture requires entertaining the eye with as much meaning, meter, and text as language does for the ears of a Hearing audience. Entertaining the eye and teaching students to understand the connection between text and action in a performance can be accomplished by exposing the students to active stage pictures and a poetic exploration of the text by the interpreters.

Of course a Hearing audience also experiences the visual excitement of a live performance. The actions of an actor, the live bodies in motion, add meaning to the spoken text for the audience, which is complicated by the addition of interpreters. Despite the ASC's provision of an environmental experience of Renaissance staging

(original staging practice), the actors approach the process from a distinctly twentieth century performance aesthetic. As actors trained in Method (or psychological) acting, thought often precedes gesture and movement.¹⁴ The ingrained structure of a psychological narrative that is required of a Method actor limits the gestural discourse available in performance. The comedy of *MSND* and the stage fighting of *Romeo and Juliet* combined with the environmental factors of the Blackfriars Playhouse, however, permit a subversion of the traditional boundaries of movement and gesture. Thus, unlike a more traditional ASL interpretation of spoken text, physical text must be incorporated into the translation and can influence the Hearing audience's experience as they view a *version* of the same action by both actor and interpreter.

Adding to the overlapping signifiers of physical action and ASL is the phenomenon of "Lag time."¹⁵ Theatrical interpreting is a simultaneous interpreting experience. The interpreters have rehearsed and have knowledge of the script, but are interpreting the spoken words and actions of the actors *in performance*. Allowing for the time to hear the words, comprehend the meaning, process the message, and interpret it into ASL, the interpretation is inevitably a few seconds behind the delivery of the actor's line. In performance this also translates to a lag time for Deaf members

14. Psychological acting, as the dominant training method for contemporary actors, establishes the dominant vocabulary for the ASC actors. Jim Warren, "ASC Actor Handbook," American Shakespeare Center, <http://americanshakespearecenter.com/v.php?pg=175> (accessed February 1, 2009).

15. Melanie Metzger, *Sign language Interpreting: Deconstructing the Myth of Neutrality* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 1999), 8-9.

of the audience.¹⁶ A more visual show is helpful in maintaining an even focus for the audience on both stage action and interpretation. The interpretation therefore is highly contextual for each performance, creating a parallel representation of each moment as it occurs in order to create an equivalent experience for the Deaf audience.

Placing the interpreters

In the Blackfriars Playhouse, placement of the interpreter influences both the space and the energy of the play and alters the experience of the spectator and performer. The audience may benefit from the additional information or be distracted by the extraneous action. The performers are forced to take into account the spatial relations of another body in the space, as well as the possibility of integrating another body into performance. Choosing the appropriate placement for the interpreter is an important part of preparing for a performance.

There are three basic kinds of interpreter placement: (1) shadow interpreting, (2) zone interpreting, and (3) focused placement (platform/sightline).¹⁷ Shadow interpreting is the most complex (and expensive) because it involves the incorporation of interpreters into the actual staging, and the interpreters must be a part

16. The lag time can be both beneficial and disruptive to a particular moment of performance. The D/deaf audience laughing at a joke 30 seconds after the hearing audience creates a dissonance to the action of the performance.

17. Julie Gebron, *Sign the Speech: An Introduction to Theatrical Interpreting*, (OR: Butte Publications, 1996), 16-22.

of the rehearsal process.¹⁸ Each role that requires interpretation (signed or spoken) is assigned to an interpreter who follows (shadows) the character for the duration of the performance. Zone interpreting, like the “zone defense” in sports, assigns an interpreter a portion of the stage. Any action that occurs within the assigned “zone” is the responsibility of the interpreter—regardless of character. As for focused placement, the interpreters are placed in front of the stage, completely separated from the action with a spotlight focus. The text is divided up by character and action. Focused placement is the most popular type of interpreter placement because it is the most obvious and also simplifies assigning seats for a Deaf audience.

When it comes to accessibility, ASL interpreters are incorporated without much opportunity for preparation. Not much thought is given to finding an appropriate place for both the interpreter and Deaf audience member that would provide an equivalent theatrical experience to that of the Hearing audience. Since a majority of commercial theatres have a proscenium stage and raked seating, the interpreters often are placed in front of and slightly below the stage functioning as a kind of closed captioning. None of these options, however, are ideal for the ASC.

18. Novak’s *Twelfth Night* incorporated a kind of Shadow interpreting. Each character was portrayed by a hearing actor who was assigned several spoken roles that were delivered from the stage. ASL Shakespeare Project, “Main,” University of San Francisco, <http://www.aslshakespeare.com> (accessed October 7, 2007).

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Interpreter Placement

In order to make the decisions about placement and interpreting choices based on staging, the interpreter first must see the a performance of the play; and I did so. The main plot of *MSND* is a rather complex one that involves two sets of couples (Hermia and Lysander, and Helena and Demetrius) whose romantic cross-purposes are complicated further by their entrance into the play's fairyland woods where the King and Queen of the Fairies (Oberon and Titania) preside and the impish folk character of Puck or Robin Goodfellow plies his trade. Less subplot than a brilliant satirical device, another set of characters - Bottom the weaver and his bumptious band of "rude mechanicals" - stumble into the main doings when they go into the same enchanted woods to rehearse a play that is very loosely (and comically) based on the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe, their hilarious home-spun piece taking up Act V of Shakespeare's comedy.¹⁹

For the interpreters, the *MSND* production's biggest performance challenges were how they should deal with the fairies and mechanicals while interpreting. The fairies were portrayed as bird-like creatures (Oberon as a kind of King Bat) and the mechanicals' humor was very reliant on the use of audience interaction. The full stage was used in the scenes with the fairy and mechanicals (including the final Pyramus and Thisbe performance). The two interpreters had to integrate themselves

19. The second Arden edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is used for all textual references in this chapter. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Harold F. Brooks, ed. (London: Arden Shakespeare 2nd ed., 2007).

into this stage picture without interfering with the performance. The interpreters overcame these hurdles by applying elements of the Interactive Interpreting Model.

The model is “a concatenation of the interaction of many factors, not solely the activities of the interpreter; and the action of the participants is dependant upon the action of the other participants or, in some cases, the lack of action.”²⁰ Theatrical interpreting in this space requires consideration of actor, audience, staging, and space, and to incorporate all factors applied the following three techniques: (1) placing the interpreters on a similar level as the performers, (2) matching some of the sign choices with the gestures of the actors, and (3) occasionally including the interpreters into specific acting moments.

To identify the best placement location for the interpreters, before the performance the interpreters walked through the space and examined several potential levels of placement. Because both interpreters were unable to fit slightly off the stage, the interpreters decided to stand on the downstage right section on the stage. This placement was deemed optimal due to the minimal action at that corner of the stage and the removal of certain audience seats. Another benefit was that no fight or dance choreography had to be altered.

The interpreters on the stage did, however, influence certain aspects of the performance. Oberon’s description of the love potion herb, originally played open to the audience, became a moment for the actor to create the flower with the non-signing

20. David A. Stewart, Jerome D. Schein, and Brenda E. Cartwright, *Sign Language Interpreting: Exploring its Art and Science (MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1998)*, 34.

interpreter,²¹ wrapping her in his cloak and integrating her as he might have done so to an audience member on the stage. Other actors chose to ignore the interpreters and integrated them into the stage picture as merely a design element.

Text Work

Once the interpreters' placement was set, the interpreters' task to create the translation began. The first, and surprisingly complex, task was to assign characters to each interpreter and create name signs. Interpreters are assigned characters because it is helpful, and less confusing, to the audience to see one interpreter develop a character as one actor develops a character. Another reason specific characters are assigned to each interpreter is share the signing of dialogue by dividing lovers and/or scene partners, which has the additional benefit of enabling the interpreters to converse with each other just like the actors do. Each character is then assigned a name sign based on a dominant physical or character trait.²²

A name sign is the ASL equivalent of a nickname in English. Generally, naming is one by combining the first letter of the person's (in this case character's) name with a physical attribute. For example, Hermia is short and Helena is tall. We contrasted the characters by signing Hermia as an H in the middle of the chest (her height) and Helena around the temple (both her height and the fact that the character

21. One interpreter was signing the lines of Oberon, the other "non-signing" interpreter could respond to the actions of the actor.

22. Samuel J. Supalla discusses the history of name signs, and a list of the name signs of historical figures in his book. Samuel J. Supalla, *The Book of Name Signs: Naming in American Sign Language* (Washington, DC: DawnSign Press, 1992).

wore glasses). There is no perfect way to integrate an interpreter into a performance, but the goal is to create a logical visual parallel of staging and dialogue.

After the characters are assigned, the interpreters began the task of creating a translation which incorporates the poetics of both Shakespeare and ASL to create sign agreement. Sign agreement is particularly important in interpreting Shakespeare, as the “play on words” necessitates a parallel play on signs. This was particularly challenging when it came to the mechanicals. Assigned the role of Bottom the Weaver, I had to create ways to “mis-sign” to follow Bottom as he misuses his words, as well as match the energy of the actor’s physical characterization of the role. A major textual challenge came from the biggest joke of the play: Bottom becoming an ass. In English, the word ass can signify a donkey, an unintelligent boorish person, or a part of the human anatomy. For each of these definitions ASL has a unique sign, which supports a literal interpretation but elides the humor that is intended by the double and triple entendres.²³ In order to create a successful interpretation several linguistic devices were incorporated into the performance: gesture, fingerspelling, use of classifiers, and a combination of all three

23. The theatrical interpreting issues related to humor have yet to be the focus of a publication. For more on the importance of humor in Deaf culture, see Susan D. Rutherford, “Funny in Deaf—Not in Hearing,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 96, no. 381 (Jul. – Sept., 1983); Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1988); and Cynthia L. Peters, *Deaf American Literature: From the Carnival to the Canon* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2000).

Signing the Character

The sign for the character of Bottom was the letter “B” with the right hand placed at the temple, which could be a running visual joke because he does, eventually, grow ears. Snout’s line “Bottom thou art changed” could then be interpreted by signing the Bottom name sign (B at the temple with the right hand) and then placing the left hand at the opposite temple to signify the change.²⁴ The word-play becomes sign-play in this instance as the sign for Bottom transitions to a classifier for ears, which transitions to gesture when Snout covers his mouth with his hands as an expression of “Oh No!”²⁵ The comedic moment is complemented by Bottom mirroring Snout’s sign choice of the two-ears as an insult (“your asshead”). The word play that was accomplished through a visual remained a consistent sign choice for the rest of the scene.

Parallel word-play/sign-play was also accomplished with the use of the sign for “to mock.” The sign, as traditionally used, consists of both hands with the index and pinky fingers extended (the gesture often seen at heavy metal concerts or University of Texas football games) and pointed at the object of mockery. “I mock you” would be directionally away from the body and “you mock me” would be directionally towards the body. Placing the handshape for “mockery” at the forehead changes the meaning just as the extended fingers with the location change together

24. This would gloss as “Bottom You Two-Ears-(cover mouth)” with the addition of disbelief/horror as the facial expression (tone/affect).

25. Peter Novak also discusses word/sign play as part of the process of translating *Twelfth Night*. ASL Shakespeare Project, “The Project – Process” University of San Francisco, <http://www.aslshakespeare.com> (accessed October 7, 2007).

suggest ears. The shifting of location allows for a simultaneous meaning of both “mockery” and “ears.” The play of location and handshape parameters conveys the double meaning of ass (one who is mocked) and ass (one who has ears). This moment also provides a connection to classical gesture of “horns” which signifies a cuckold.²⁶ Though the sparse documentation of the etymology of sign language does not have information as to the origin and development of many individual signs, the ASL sign for “mock” is connected to the classic gesture of the horned cuckold through handshape, movement, and location. Bottom is not cuckolded, but he is participating in the bed trick on Titania and is cuckolding Oberon. The connection to animal lust and “horniness” also becomes physicalized in the rise and fall of Bottom’s ears in the text as well any staged action.²⁷

Fingerspelling is the most direct choice for the interpretation of “ass” in a scene. Breaking down the word to a phonetic level by spelling it out as well as the underlying message that it is an “English” word and is being spelled out to signify a lexical borrowing. Lexical borrowing is the incorporation of a foreign language word or phrase as it has a particular significance in its own language (i.e. *schlep*). In ASL fingerspelling is a way to incorporate an English term.²⁸ This is used when Bottom

26. As discussed in Chapter Three, the etymology of ASL is a recent academic phenomenon, therefore connecting *historically* significant signs is done by looking at the phonemic level (parameters of the sign).

27. Bottom, as a sexualized character, is referenced in Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Harold F. Brooks, ed. (London: Arden Shakespeare 2nd ed., 2007); David Selbourne, ed., *The Making of Midsummer Night’s Dream* (New York: Routledge, 1985); and Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999).

reveals his personal and simple truth with “Man is but an *ass* if he go about to expound this dream.”²⁹ The interpretation ideally should convey the same simplicity. In order to match the text, tone, and meaning, the most direct interpretation is to put forth the word. Ironically, the mere spelling of the word elicited a huge response from the Deaf teenage audience. The simple act of spelling a questionable word paired with Bottom’s somber expression was a moment of hilarity for the Deaf group. Connecting the tone and affect of the actor to the interpretation as, was done here, is very important to successfully interpret the performance.

An example of a multilayered interpretation of a character is the portrayal of Peaseblossom, one of the fairies. The role of Peaseblossom is tiny, but in the ASC production casting a large male actor with a deep and resonant voice created a visual joke. When Bottom is introduced to the fairies, each fairy’s name is said a particular light and airy voice except for Peaseblossom. Incorporating the sound humor into the translation required a combination of facial expression and sign location. The other fairies names were placed higher on the body to signify to light emotions. Peaseblossom’s name was signed as “flower” which blossomed in front of the belly button combined with a stern facial expression. This conveyed the dichotomy of a fairy with the appearance of a large man in tights. Even if the interpreter successfully conveys the humor of this character, the attention of the audience should be redirected to the characterization of the actor in the role.

28. Einar Haugen, "The Analysis of Linguistic Borrowing," *Language* 26, no.2 (Apr. – Jun., 1950): 210-231.

29. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, act 4, scene 1, 206-7.

Redirecting the energy of performance means the interpreter's ability to throw the audience's attention back to the stage so the actors are creating the roles. In *MSND*, the interplay between interpreter and actor is especially challenging due to the physical comedy that occurs in performance. The time lag between the interpreted text and the action of the play needed to be negotiated in order to present the smoothest transition. This challenge often arose where tempo and physicality were an integral part of the comedic moment, which occurred with the scenes between the lovers as well as the mechanicals in the performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe*. The comedy in the fight scenes between the confused lovers is enhanced by the combination of colorful insults with physical action. A successful interpretation required finding a parallel insult that could be signed in an appropriate amount of time so the audience had the option of watching the physical action.

The chase scene of Demetrius and Helena exemplified this challenge. Helena delivers her lines of willing subservience to an unfeeling Demetrius:

I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love,
And yet a place of high respect with me,
Than to be used as you use your dog?³⁰

The staging of this scene resulted in Helena being positioned on all fours, in the begging position of a dog, at the feet of Demetrius. To create an interpretation that would both provide the subservient and sexual undertones of the lines, I chose to

30. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, act 2, scene 1, 203-210.

replace the term "spaniel" for "dog." This was necessary for practical as well as aesthetic reasons. ASL does not have a breed specific sign for "spaniel" and attempting to fingerspell the breed name would detract from the meter and meaning of the line. In order to create a parallel (and subtle) shift in meaning from "spaniel" to "dog", I chose to shift from "dog" to "puppy." The sign for puppy is a curved hand simulating scratching at the ear. Choosing "puppy" rather than "dog" in this instance more clearly referenced youthfulness, exuberance, foolishness, and the association with "puppy love." The action of the sign allowed for some flexibility of my body language, as the interpreter, to turn my head towards the action of the couple. The audience then followed my gaze to the action of the scene to witness the "puppy-like" behavior of Helena.

Romeo and Juliet

Preparation

Romeo and Juliet was the second production I interpreted for the VSDB. This performance differed from that of *MSND* in the interpreters' placement and relationship with the actors. Also, unlike the *MSND* performance, it was intended for a Deaf and Blind audience and discussion workshops preceding the performance.³¹

The placement of the interpreters was changed after *MSND* both to provide more seats to audience members and to account for the large group fight scenes and

31. Both the Deaf and the Blind students were introduced to staging techniques. I will be focusing on the Deaf students.

physical choreography in *Romeo and Juliet*. The ASC built a platform specifically for the interpreters, which was shaped for the stage left area. The platform replaced a set of stairs and placed the interpreters slightly below eye level of the action. This placement permitted the interpreters to be incorporated into specific performance moments and to maintain a safe distance from the larger action.

My presentation on the interpretation of *MSND* at the 2007 Blackfriars conference was attended by several of the cast members of *Romeo and Juliet*. And for those that participated in the VSDB workshops, the actors told me that my explanation of the interpreting process and how it influences text was useful for them. Approximately sixty Deaf and/or Blind students ranging in ages 14-21 years attended a workshop on *Romeo and Juliet* led by the cast of the play. The workshop was opened by a brief presentation on Shakespeare and language and then a group activity was assigned. The students were divided into four groups and each was assigned an act of the play that was to be rehearsed and performed. In this activity, the students could create a dance, act out scenes, make up song lyrics, or create any signed/gestured interpretive performance of the text. The groups parted to rehearse and then returned to see the entire play's key moments presented by these student groups, act by act. The students' hands-on analysis of the actions in the play was extremely helpful in improving their depth of understanding of the ASC performance.

The workshop gave the actors the brief opportunity to experience being a linguistic minority. Working with the student groups, the actors were provided with two interpreters to facilitate communication. The approach of the actors differed with each group's goals. Some actors chose to try direct communication with the students

by showing them physical actions to copy. Others spent time explaining events and exploring options verbally through the interpreters. The different approaches influenced the scenes produced by the students, which range from abstract gestured moments to highly textualized interpretations of Shakespeare's words.

In Performance

The interpreted performance of *Romeo and Juliet* was a unique experience for the actors and the audience alike. The VSDB audience was a mix of Deaf and Blind students, plus faculty and staff. The blind (close vision) students were seated on the stage in order to provide as much access to the action as possible.³² For the actors this meant several of the comedic "bits" which had been played to the audience members on the stage had to be adapted for an audience that could not see them. To accommodate the many visual comedic moments, the actors often turned to the interpreters for help at these key moments. Inclusion of the interpreter added to the humor for the Deaf audience, as it is not a traditional experience for the interpreter to have moments of participation. The humanity of the interpreter, particularly with references to the interpreter's virginity or physical appearance, is indeed comedic.

An example of the integration of actor and interpreter for the benefit of the audience and performance is the Queen Mab speech performed by Mercutio (actor Benjamin Curns) and simultaneously interpreted by me. The Queen Mab speech is problematic for an interpreter because it is deeply contextual to the play, the

32. Close vision refers to partial blindness. It may refer to tunnel vision (lack of peripheral vision), light and shadow, or legally defined blindness.

character, the actor, and the moment of performance. The interpreted moment is best served by combining ASL signs and gesture. The land of dreams is established as something with flexible boundaries that Queen Mab (and the mind) may jump in and out of at her leisure. The description of the dreamer and the dream must be described with the body and contrasted through the placement of signs in neutral space and physical location (on the body). The actor can contrast the dreamer and the dream with both physical and vocal shifts: The dreamer is of the earth, planted and physical, but the dream is gestured high accompanied by the actor's vocal shift.

In the ASC production, the focus of the actor during the Queen Mab speech shifts back and forth between Romeo and the audience. During the interpreted performance, the portion of the speech directed out from the center of the stage was not a solo performance. The space was shared by Mercutio and the interpreter, as the speech needed the full energy of both to be successful for this audience. The narrative was shared and then overlapped with the physical connection of actor/interpreter. Traditionally on the line, "O'er ladies lips who straight on kisses dream," the actor in this production gestures to a woman on stage begging for a kiss. Because the stage audience was the blind students, the actor took advantage of the interpreter's proximity for this moment. By choosing the interpreter who was also signing the role, the actor and interpreter share the sign of the kiss and overlap of the two characterizations. The actor and interpreter, up until that moment of intersection, had created parallel worlds for Mab (one signed, one spoken). Once the moment was over both actor and interpreter returned to a shared but mutually exclusive performance.

Integrated moments that involve contact between actor and interpreter require a specific space and familiarity to be achieved. Integrated moments between actor and interpreter that involve common movements or gestures, however, are feasible in a variety of spaces and can be modified based on the needs of the actor, interpreter, and production. Therefore, continued research and training in rhetorical gesture for both actors and interpreters would provide a common vocabulary to merge the sign systems of a production into an aesthetically pleasing and accessible experience.

Audience reception

The audience make-up greatly influenced the actors' choices for their performances. The inclusion of a blind audience increased the use of sound, groans, and non-textual acting for every death scene. The silence of the Deaf audience was quite disconcerting to several of the actors because they were used to performing for a Hearing audience. Actors often interpret the silence of a Hearing audience as an uninterested audience. A silent Deaf audience, and in particular a teenage Deaf audience, however, often means that the spectators are too busy watching the play to talk amongst themselves. At the talkback session for the performance the most common statement from the Deaf students in response to *Romeo and Juliet* was "fascinating."

Conclusion

How can one determine whether an interpretation is successful? Does success require the audience to comprehend the equivalent translation, rhyme, meter, and wit through multi-layered sign choices? I believe that it is unlikely. An audience of hearing spectators does not follow every line of Shakespeare's text, but comprehends narrative, character and story through the combination of poetry, meter, music, and staging. In comparison, a Deaf audience comprehends through the stage picture and ASL interpretation. The relationship of Romeo and Juliet, as demonstrated through the scene at the dance, is written as a sonnet. A Hearing audience does not have a conscious awareness that their dialogue is the creation of a poem. It is the use of the sonnet structure by the actors and the cadence in the ears of the audience that subconsciously informs listeners this is a couple that "fits."

An interpretation of that scene, therefore, must convey the same subconscious message that this is an "ideal couple" through language. The audience does not need to have a linguistic background in ASL poetics to have a subconscious response to the poetic structure of ASL in order to glean the exact same message. The challenge for the interpreters is to create an equivalent and contextual interpretation to provide that experience. Like the interpreted performances at the American Shakespeare Center discussed above, combining textual analysis, audience/interpreter placement, and locating the moment of overlapping discourse can create a parallel experience.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The rest is silence.

--*Hamlet*, act 3 scene 2

Enter Oberon, King of the Fairies. He takes the stage with a masculine flourish and thinks of Titania, his Queen and the mischief that has befallen her:

I wonder if Titania be awaked.
Then, what it was that next came in her eye,
Which she must dote on in extremity¹

On cue, enters Puck leaping across the stage to joyfully report, “My mistress with a monster is in love.” He energetically reports to Oberon his mischief making on the troupe of actors rehearsing in the woods. Puck jumps and gesture his way through a tale of delight and mockery of this amateur acting troupe as he terrorizes them and takes advantage of an actor revealing,

I led them on in this distracted fear
And left sweet Pyramus translated there.²

The audience, at this point, has already seen this event take place in the previous scene when Bottom is translated into an animal. Puck’s speech, therefore, incorporates his *interpretation* of actions he took upon the actors and Pyramus (Bottom) “translated” to an ass is interpreted as a fool as well as an animal. The audience sees Puck and Oberon merrymaking; two fairies identified by costume and physicality, and hear the retelling of events in verse. An audience member may

1. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, act 3, scene 2, 1-3.

2. Ibid., 31-2.

privilege the story as the dominant narrative but, also relies on the visual semiotic systems of the performance; the costuming of Puck and Oberon which identify them as “different” or other-worldly, the facial expressions of the character as Puck retells his actions, and the gestures that highlight the action as Puck performs the physicality of “Sweet Pyramus” and his translated form.

Puck physically "translates" Bottom by modifying key human qualities (signifiers) into animal qualities. By transforming Bottom's human ears, both his perception and reception are changed. The new signifiers (ears and a bray) change how the character is “read” by an audience and he is reinterpreted. In the same way a written text can be mined for rhetorical signs which inform not only stage activity, but emotion and action for an actor. Bernard Beckerman’s discussion on acting Shakespeare argues,

Too often a theatrical reading is conceived primarily, if not entirely, as a matter of visualizing stage business. I would suggest a different emphasis. By becoming attuned, not only to the visual context of costume and properties, but also to the gestural language interwoven with the text, we can more acutely trace the essential action within the text.³

The action in the text is the foundation of live performance.

Puck’s interpretation of written text to action is enacted for Oberon’s education and entertainment. Through embodying the story, the words themselves are actions and provide Oberon, as audience, with an accessible version. The actor too is using the stage picture, costume, and text to embody the events for the education and entertainment of the audience. To be theatrical it requires several

3. Bernard Beckerman, “Explorations in Shakespeare’s Drama,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 137.

continuous overlapping sign systems. Patrice Pavis in *Languages of the Stage* claims that:

...no theatrical sign is created in which textuality and iconicity could blend into a specifically theatrical product. ...There are no 'synthetic' theatrical signs in the theatre (synthetic in the same sense as the color green is the 'synthesis' of blue and yellow), only continuous interactions between the signifieds produced by the signifying systems.⁴

The audience in an interpreted performance, however, is witnessing the creation of a synthetic sign.

In a theatrical performance the signifieds that Pavis is referring to would include: theatrical architecture, set, lights, costume, stage movement (blocking), text (script), subtext (emotionality), physicality (gesture), and audience response. During an interpreted performance the production of a sign concept by an interpreter takes all of these elements into account at the phonemic level. In order to create a sign that engages in the theatrical moment, all aspects of that moment are filtered into a signed concept. This moment of intersection of body, space, and text is as temporal as the performance moment, but the system of creating that sign lays a foundation for analyzing a performance moment as a text.

This dissertation is an exploration of that intersection in history, culture, and performance through the lens of the performing and performative body. Specifically, by using gesture to provide accessibility to text and performance I reframe the concept of access from a pejorative connotation with disability and resituate the body in context. Incorporating ASL, or an interpreter, into a production is an opportunity

4. Patrice Pavis, *Languages of the Stage: Essays in the Semiology of Theatre* (New York: Performing Arts Journal, 1993), 32.

to create Pavis's "specifically theatrical product" as ASL uses text, action, body, and environment simultaneously to form a synthetic sign in any given moment. This provides a method of reexamining a moment or moments of performance by individually examining repeatable sign systems in an *untheatrical* moment. This work however has broader applications than a single performance. I have put forth a methodology that supports continued research in and across four fields: Performance theory, Performance practice, Deaf culture, and ASL interpreting.

Performance Theory

In attempting to reconcile the actor's emotional desire with his physical actions, theatre scholars turn to scientific methodology. For Joseph Roach "...The scientific languages in which acting has been described... in the times of actors whose memories we most revere..."⁵ is associated with the sciences of psychology and physiology. "The seminal interplay between the plastic arts and theatrical theory...corresponds directly...to the interaction between art and science that encouraged the most advanced thinking of the period."⁶ Roach discusses the science behind an actor's pursuit of good ("natural") acting using the gestural tracts of seventeenth and eighteenth century doctors and philosophers as a basis to discuss communication. He argues that views of "natural acting" depend upon the scientific theories of the culture. For seventeenth and eighteenth century actors, specific

5. Ibid., 58.

6. Joseph Roach, *The Player's Passion* (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 16.

gestures that relate to specific emotions were a part of scientific exploration of the period. The philosophers and doctors Roach discusses were often associated with the deaf and using sign language to support axioms of a “universal language,” but at no point in Roach’s work is the Deaf community and culture taken into consideration.

The drive of the actor, Roach argues, is the display of emotionality through physical expression. The method of doing so, however, is based in a psychological (or thoughtful) approach leading to a physiological response. This is a technique that does not consider a physical response active and linguistic but believes it to be guided by a psychological push against repression, or a pre-expressive, uncontrolled physical response.⁷ By including the parallel cultural history of the development of Deaf culture and sign language into Roach’s work, the scientific discourse of communication, and how one communicates emotion, broadens to allow for mind/body/emotion overlap.

Performance Studies scholars base gesture in ritualized performance and seek global commonality through a pre-verbally expressive state. Scholar Judith Butler explores “how gender identity [is] instituted through a stylized repetition of acts.” Victor Turner in his foundational text, “Performing Ethnography,” includes analysis of “meta-messages” in the embodiment of the “play” ethnography.⁸ The studies and documentation of ritual and cultural performance by scholar Eugenio Barba, however, suggest gestures and the elements of embodiment are cross-cultural. In an effort to

7. Ibid., 106.

8. Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” 154-66; Victor Turner “Performing Ethnography,” 265-78 in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial (New York: Routledge, 2004).

find “essences” to create “organic” emotional moments, “transculturalism” requires a standardization of embodiment regardless of personal cultural identity.⁹

Socioeconomic status, religion, and cultural history all influence the expression of personhood through embodiment. The generalizing of gesture without recognizing its specificity to a cultural group risks eliding an essential element of gesture—cultural essence.¹⁰

Human beings do share the commonality of movement. We move.

Connecting emotionality to a movement that is pre-expressive (instinctual) ignores the possibility of applying morphemic value to the smallest definitive movement.¹¹

As constantly moving bodies, even involuntary actions like breathing, blinking or a heartbeat, can be ascribed morphemic value. Defining a morpheme of movement provides it with linguistic value, which offers building blocks of physical communication that are equivalent to communicative aspects of spoken language. Gesture, therefore, has cultural value.

Examining gesture and sign language, as specific cultural material, will enliven textual and performance theory as “...the dead text of Shakespeare’s plays is very unlike an ordinary corpse. It has an obstinate way of returning to life as a play

9. Richard Schechner, ed., *Performance Studies: An introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 244.

10. Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, “Theatre Anthropology,” in Schechner, 246.

11. For further information on (ASL) Morphemes, see Clayton Valli and Ceil Lucas, *Linguistics of American Sign Language*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 1995), 51.

in our minds, even as we study it meticulously, counting its commas or noting its auxiliary words.”¹² Despite the focus on Shakespeare’s plays as text to be performed, rhetorical gesture, within the study of Shakespeare’s words, has been placed on a historical backburner.

The core of Original Staging Practices (OSP), as it is now called, is an interest in the conditions under which Shakespeare’s plays were first performed.¹³ OSP operates from a predominantly cultural materialist perspective in seeking tangible Elizabethan materials to explore intangible textual matters. A specific architectural environment is a vital part and primary lens of the OSP theatrical experience; also including natural light, costume, and makeup choices based on evidence of Elizabethan materials.

OSP, as actors are currently researching it, is entrenched in contemporary performance discourse. The world of technology and modern realism means despite the available Elizabethan material/spatial boundaries, the acting of a text is limited within the by the dominant actor training and vocabulary—psychological realism.¹⁴ Actors trained in psychological realism think of action in the text as stage direction. They conflate action and gesture seeking textual references for information about movement within the environmental space not the embodied space. Rhetorical gesture is written into the text as one of the many devices Shakespeare uses to direct actors through a performance beyond the level of stage blocking. Applying ASL

12. John Russell Brown, *Discovering Shakespeare: A New Guide to the Plays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 4.

13. As discussed in Chapter One.

14. As previously discussed in Chapter Four.

translations to discover rhetorical gesture evidence from the text integrates the last and easily forgotten rhetorical element.

Patrick Tucker's First Folio acting theories also explored Shakespeare's rhetorical clues in the performance of text. Tucker does this "in a full-length play, where you do not read it, there is no rehearsal for it, and you do not know what will be said to you until the actual moment of performance in front of an audience."¹⁵ Neither the architecture of space at Shakespeare's Globe (or American Shakespeare Center) nor the architecture of Tucker's cue scripts provides the opportunity to use a technique that was present in Shakespeare's time—the three-dimensionality of word as gesture—architecture in performance.

The overlapping discourses of performance gesture and sign language in this dissertation focus on the theatrical product (or synthetic sign) possible within Shakespearean text. ASL, in addition to supporting gestural analysis, also provides three-dimensionality to text when not in a theatrical performance. An ASL translation of a written text is an act of embodiment that reframes the text as performative without the overlapping sign systems that occur in production.

Future research can not only place rhetorical gesture in OSP studies, but also consider Shakespearean text three-dimensionally without performance. A simultaneously read and signed play may reveal new textual matter for scholars without requiring concept driven production. Historiographically, a "gesticular lens"

15. Patrick Tucker, *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 43.

can be used to reexamine records of seventeenth and eighteenth century actors in performance or to revisit the mute state of any conquered or oppressed culture. Within a theatrical discourse, embodied study of actors and acting technique permits moments of intersection between theory and performance.

Performance in Practice

“Throughout the plays, if we are to read them in the way Shakespeare imagined them, each speech must be conceived as part of an act which involves the whole body of the actor.”¹⁶ I have posited a form of gesture utilizing the linguistic structure of ASL to provide actors with a system that overlaps psychological action and representative gesture. Unlike psychological gesture, a movement that expresses the psychology of the character in concert with emotion and intent as *subtext*, ASL based gesture incorporates all of the elements of production from the word itself, the emotion in text, and the environment.¹⁷ In classical acting this would be successful as the emotional intent and action are gleaned from the rhetorical devices in the text. Gesture is the embodied rhetorical device of the text. ASL is a means of extracting it. Using ASL and ASL-based gesture transforms text on the page (two-dimensional) to text that is in space (three-dimensional), allowing the mind and body to work in

16. Brown, *Discovering Shakespeare: A New Guide to the Plays*, 50.

17. Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor: on the technique of acting*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 63-76.

concert to communicate. It does not follow the rules of method acting by relying on a thoughtful emotional/psychological approach to a character as “natural.”¹⁸

Francois Delsarte attempted to connect mind, body and spirit through the trinity to form the *Cour d'esthetique Applique*.¹⁹ He studied how humans actually moved, behaved and responded to various emotional and real-life situations. Delsarte's successful structuring of movements for analysis in seeking natural connection, ironically led to its undoing, however. Star pupil Steele Mackaye's lectures and successful theatre career inspired such fervor that the Delsarte Method was taught across the United States regardless of the instructor's level of expertise with the system. By the 1890s, it was being taught everywhere, though not always as Delsarte had intended, and it fell into empty posing with little emotion. The two-dimensionality of a still figure not connecting to text or emotion is antithetical to Delsarte's goal in creating a system of movement. The deep structure of an ASL sign applied to text is language based and requires natural connection and three-dimensionality, which can rejuvenate Delsarte's foundational beliefs in the performing body.

ASL has the unique aspects of four dimensions of rhyme and classifiers.²⁰ These aspects of aesthetic sign creation permit, and for Shakespeare translation,

18. Joseph Roach, *The Players Passion* (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 58.

19. Discussed in Chapters One and Three. Ted Shawn, *Every Little Movement*, 2nd Rev. ed. (New York: Dance Horizons, Inc., 1974), 24.

20. Discussed in Chapter One. More in Clayton Valli, “Poetics of American Sign Language Poetry,” (PhD diss., Union Institute, 1993), 27-41.

encourage constantly developing new sign expressions in order to convey clear meaning and poetry. Classifiers show movement, location, and appearance often simultaneously in a single sign or phrase. This immediacy and creativity of language parallel Shakespeare's text which "now and again uses a word neither the original nor the modern audience had even heard before, which yet remains intelligible to both..."²¹ The word/sound/poetics and rhetoric created by Shakespeare developed as the need to express a thought arose. ASL can do the same as a linguistically flexible, yet highly contextual, language.

Incorporating rhetorical gesture into rehearsal practices will give new insights to text by creating the world of the play which is both unlimited and bound by the embodied text. Including rhetorical gesture and ASL foundation in visual-gestural communication in actor training programs would reconcile the theoretical challenges of teaching psychological realism and 'period styles.' Movement theories incorporated into the textual analysis phase of learning requires a student actor to heighten textual, physical, and spatial awareness grounded in tangible text of the script, of the body and of the performance space. The opportunity to implement this course into a mainstream training program would create a new performance technique and a more universal approach to actor training.

21. Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 5.

Deaf Culture

It was not the documentation of the first Deaf citizen, the first Deaf teacher, or even the first and only Deaf university in the world that provided the foundation for Deaf Culture. Deaf culture was established with ASL. William Stokoe's research of the linguistic structure in ASL "formed the foundation for this new construction of deafness as a sociological phenomenon rather than a physical impairment."²² The Deaf community was established as a linguistic minority with the embodiment of the word/sign CULTURE. The acceptance of the term in ASL recognized "...the definition of the deaf as a colonized, ethnic, linguistic minority [which] has in turn been widely accepted in deaf circles and taught [...]."²³ The Deaf community's embrace of this identity is illustrated in the increase of interest in Deaf history, Deaf studies programs in universities, Deaf literature and performance, and political activism that parallels the civil right movements.²⁴

The Deaf community, in order to be participants in the public sphere often documents cultural history and literature in English. In maintaining cultural identity, ASL was used in private homes, Deaf clubs, and dormitories to delineate Deaf identity from mainstream culture.²⁵ In continuing to negotiate between private and public discourse, the rapid rate of developing technology has served as a double-

22. Lennard J. Davis, "Deafness and the Riddle of Indentity," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jan 12, 2007.

23. Ibid.

24. John Vickrey Van Cleve, ed., *The Deaf History Reader* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2007).

25. Cynthia L. Peters, *Deaf American Literature: From the Carnival to the Canon*, (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2000), 173-200.

edged sword for the Deaf community. The ease of documenting ASL through film and video and the broadcasting ability of youtube, video phones, and vlogs has made the Deaf community more visible and the language more acceptable to mainstream culture. Other technologies, however, have forced the Deaf community to rethink its boundaries and identity. The popularity of text pagers and instant messaging relies on English codes to communicate effectively. The medical advances of digital hearing aids and the controversies of the cochlear implant “curing” deafness continue to inspire debate about culture, identity, and language.²⁶

This research connecting ASL, rhetorical gesture, and Shakespeare can benefit the Deaf community three-fold. First, it documents the importance of signed languages and their contributions to theatre history and mainstream performance culture. Second, a written theory (with visual examples) that provides historical context to the intersection of ASL and rhetorical gesture provides access to Shakespeare’s text without privileging English or mainstream perspectives of spoken language. Finally, it improves access to performance both artistically by actors comfortable with gesture and visual-spatial staging, and literally by improved translations in performance by interpreters.

Classical text translations into ASL will benefit Deaf education simply by having an accessible text for students who do not consider English a first language. Future editions of Shakespeare can add CD-ROMs or DVDs that translate and

26. For further reading on the Cochlear implant controversy, see Lois Bragg, ed., *Deaf World: A Historical Reader and Primary Sourcebook*, (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 40-42, 274, 309-315, 325-332; Beverly Biderman, *Wired for Sound: A Journey Into Hearing*, (Toronto: Trifolium Books, 1998); *Sound and Fury*, DVD, directed by Josh Aronson, New York: New Video Group, 2002.

document scripts of full texts (including introductions and footnotes) into ASL. A translated text would be an excellent resource for teachers of the Deaf and ASL interpreters in both classroom and theatrical settings.

ASL Interpreting

The theatrical interpreting field is facing challenges from both the theatre community and within the interpreting community. Theatre administrators often invite Deaf audiences in by using an open caption systems that put English words on an LCD screen during a performance. The theatre community, uninformed about the nuances of Deaf culture, focuses on the high cost of interpreters and not the opportunity for creating a dialogue with a large ticket buying community. The interpreting community no longer formally classifies performance interpreting as a specialization. Interpreters in the legal or mental health fields are required to hold a certain amount of experience and training, but the performing arts certification and training requirement was eliminated less than a year after being instituted.²⁷

Theatrical interpreting would benefit from formal training for everyone involved. The Deaf audience member who is new to the theatrical experience, the theatre administrator that doesn't find interpreting cost effective, and the theatre interpreter who is accustomed to working off the cuff for little pay, all need to be

27. As mentioned in Chapter Four. For more information, see Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, <http://www.rid.org> (accessed January 7, 2009).

trained in access to the arts. Currently, there are few formal opportunities to have a dialogue across the fields of theatre, deaf audiences, and ASL interpreting.

Interpreting on stage requires a unique combination of technical and creative skills. Part preparation – part performance, this specialty requires a number of important traits:

- Excellent sign language skills and interpreting knowledge
- Physical awareness and agility
- Acting experience and knowledge of theatre terminology and protocol
- Judgment and the ability to work in groups²⁸

Focusing on the specifics of interpreting Shakespeare performances, the next step in putting this research into practice would be incorporating it into interpreter training.

A model of effective interpreting of Shakespeare, that can be taught and used as a foundation for other performing arts interpreting, is a future goal of this kind of work.

The incorporation of rhetorical gesture and ASL is useful for actors to improve physical vocabulary and text analysis. The incorporation of actor training is useful for interpreters to improve stage vocabulary, textual analysis, and translation skills.

Support for interpreters should also include the ability to attend rehearsals creating an interpretation specific to the performance and the actor. Training available to both actor and interpreter can enrich the performance by creating a shared vocabulary which engages all audience members equally.

28. TerpTheatre, “Technical Aspects of Interpreting On Stage” TerpTheatre, <http://terptheatre.com/technical.html> (accessed February 15, 2009).

Improving the classical theatre skills of ASL interpreters through education and research expands the discourse across the fields of theatre and interpreting. The agility of an interpreters mind and language skills needed for theatre, can be illustrated by visualizing of the concept of gesture:²⁹

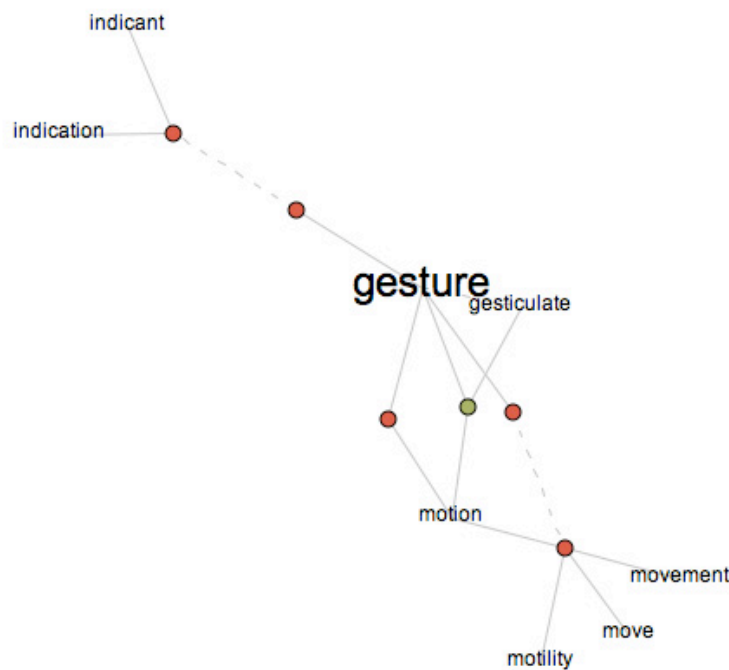


Fig. 5.1 “Gesture”

An actor’s goal in physicalizing a character is to negotiate between movement and gesture without relying on gesticulation (physical assertion without emotional and textual support) or overreaching to indication (signaling a particular movement or emotion without action). An interpreter’s goal is to move as little as possible and reflect the energy of the character through sign and gesture. An interpreter may go

29. Gesture, “Image from the Visual Thesaurus,” Thinkmap, Inc., <http://www.visualthesaurus.com> (accessed December 12, 2008).

into the realm of indication for culturally mediation (door knocks) or to signify an action is going to occur on the stage (a dance). Working as part of the ensemble, theatre interpreters will create, “For deaf audiences ... a totally accessible production ... [and] for hearing audiences a completely new form of theatrical expression.”³⁰

A successful performance of Shakespeare and a successful interpretation of a Shakespeare performance require similar preparations. Both actors and interpreters must analyze the text for information, know the dramaturgical resources available, be a good listener, and stay aware in the moment. Sharing knowledge and vocabulary at both the training level as well as in rehearsal for a particular will help avoid an, “incompetent translation either by those who know their own theatrical language but cannot read the source language in the Elizabethan texts or by those who know the source but have little command of the modern language of the stage.”³¹

Access

This dissertation is specifically focused on establishing a trans-disciplinary framework, to consider further development across the fields of Gesture studies, Deaf studies, and Shakespeare studies, as well as their sister fields of what these theories

30. Jonathan Mandell, “‘Big River’ Sings (and Signs) on Broadway,” review of *Big River*, music and lyrics by Roger Miller, book by William Hauptman, directed by Jeff Calhoun, DeafWest Theatre, New York, *The New York Times*, July 20, 2003.

31. Franklin J. Hildy, “Why Elizabethan spaces?” *Elizabethan Performance in North American Spaces: Theatre Symposium 12*, Susan Kattwinkel, ed., (Tuscaloosa, AL: Southeastern Theatre Conference and the University of Alabama Press, 2004), 116-7.

are in practice – Performance, Interpreting, and OSP. The point of intersection of these fields creates a shared vocabulary across disciplines and creates continued opportunities for research that is both theoretical and practical. Kanta Kochlar-Lindgren situates deafness and listening into a multicultural perspective of theatre. She examines the “...embedded notions of deafness/hearing, we can better understand the transformative potential of theatre for forging emergent and heterogeneous social spaces that lead to more supple listening.”³² In pursuing inclusion of deafness into multicultural theory, Kochlar-Lindgren surveys Deaf theater companies and theatre companies that have experimented with movement and silence in some way due to an encounter with Deaf Culture. Kochlar-Lindgren focuses on the influence of deafness, silence, and movement in the context of performance but does not include the experience of interpreted performance or of a Deaf audience.

There is no available comprehensive survey of the Deaf community’s experience of a live theatre performance or effect an interpreter has on the audience/actor relationship. Despite efforts to cultivate Deaf audiences, a formal analysis of the success or failure of interpreted events and the Deaf community’s theatre experience is wanting. The increase of performing arts that are available to the Deaf community suggests that there are Deaf audiences who attend and appreciate theatre. Hands On, a not-for-profit organization in New York, maintains a yearly

32. Kanta Kochlar-Lindgren, *Hearing Difference: The Third Ear in Experimental, Deaf, and Multicultural Theatre* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2006), 3.

calendar of interpreted and Deaf-friendly events and works with the TOLA program that “was developed to increase the number of accessible theater experiences for Deaf school-age children and their families (both Deaf & hearing) in the New York City Area.”³³

Appropriately, educated actors, interpreters, and teachers will not only increase but create accessible theatre. I have participated in two examples of the integration of Theory, Performance, Deaf culture, and ASL interpreting; working with the ASC and VSBD, and with Peter Cook, internationally known Deaf storyteller, performer, poet, and co-founder of The Flying Words Project.³⁴ The VSDB project focused on High School students and was a three-fold project: the classroom learning, the workshop, and the performance. Cook’s visit to Knox College was also a three-fold project: the education of the campus, the workshop, and the performance.

Before the actors arrived on campus, students of VSDB were introduced to a summary of *Romeo and Juliet* and provided with basic character information by their teachers. The character information included a Power Point presentation of the actors and the characters they portrayed providing a visual preview for the students. The actors arrived on campus with interpreters to create non-verbal scenes from each act of the play. The students were also introduced to Shakespeare as a poet and compared his use of English and ASL poetry. Each group had the opportunity to

33. Hands On Sign Interpreted Performances, “TOLA Program,” http://handson.org/frames_index.html (accessed February 2, 2009).

34. Peter Cook, “Main,” <http://deafpetercookonline.com> (accessed August 26, 2008).

perform their version of an act of the play, thus creating a “preview” of the show.

The following day the performance was interpreted for the students.

The interdisciplinary work with VSDB is an example of creating accessibility that is interactive. The students connected ASL with a language that was previously considered unreadable. That knowledge changed the perspective of their language as something functional to something poetic. The actors were also influenced by the workshops with the students. The performance was high energy and the physicality of performers shifted to more gesture and movement. In a space like the Blackfriars Playhouse, “... contact between actors and audience must be achieved that gives immediate access in both directions and the closest possible view of the intricate yet sometimes very simple interplay between the persons of the drama.”³⁵ Integrating the theatre experience and the Deaf experience not only achieved access through language, but achieved access in both directions for actor and audience through a shared cross-cultural vocabulary.

Deaf Poet and Performance Artist, Peter Cook was strongly influenced by the work of beat poets. Raised orally, Cook began signing in college, where he "fused a Beat aesthetic with a fascination with the Deaf actor Bernard Bragg's technique of 'visual vernacular [.]' After pairing up with the hearing poet Kenny Lerner, Cook began to take sign poetry in a new direction, creating alternative or even avant-garde

35. John Russell Brown, *Free Shakespeare* (New York: Applause Books, 1997), 121.

poetry accessible to both hearing and Deaf audiences."³⁶ As an actor, Cook appeared as Feste in the previously discussed ASL Shakespeare Project's production of *Twelfth Night* with the Amaryllis Theatre Company. As an educator, he teaches at Columbia College in Chicago and lectures on poetry and performance internationally.³⁷

Peter Cook's visit to Knox College was preceded by an ASL workshop of "survival signs" and open discussion about Deaf culture led by me, as the only faculty member with Deaf culture knowledge.³⁸ Knox, a small liberal arts college in Galesburg Illinois, was generally unfamiliar with Deaf culture. The college does not currently offer courses in disability or Deaf studies and invited Peter as a poet and theatre practitioner.

The workshop "Creative uses of ASL", attended by theatre majors, introduced ASL and gesture as a performance technique. Peter presented two hours of exercises based on physicalizing emotion and rethinking how the whole body (including facial expressions) tells a story. That evening Peter gave a performance that included storytelling in ASL and gesture,

...conveying to the audience, by way of Snyder, basic information about the deaf community. He talked about growing up in a family where he was the only one who was deaf and the only one who could sign. To conclude the performance, Cook told the story of Sir Gawain & Lady Ragnell without sign

36. H-Dirksen L. Bauman, Jennifer L. Nelson, and Heidi M. Rose, eds., *Signing the Body Poetic: Essays on American Sign Language Literature*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 10.

37. Peter Cook, "Main," <http://deafpetercookonline.com> (accessed August 26, 2008).

38. Rachel Bauer, "Performer Creates Visual Action to Words," *The Knox Student*, January 22, 2009.

or interpretation, simply using movements and pantomime to convey it to the audience. The audience watched, rapt, in silence. Cook's movements were expressive and lucid, making the story not only easy to follow, but engaging and beautiful to watch.³⁹

The audience filled several roles during Cook's performance: participant, observer, listener, and student. Audience members were integrated into the world of the story following both Cook's visual storytelling and my voice interpretation of it. With the final story of Sir Gawain "there is a sense in which we are all being asked to cross the 'hearing' line."⁴⁰

Introducing Peter Cook to a hearing audience not only improved awareness of Deaf and disability issues on campus but improved the theatre department's awareness of movement and physical expression. The students devised theatre rehearsals began to incorporate more tableau and movement to express emotion and objectives. Cook, not accustomed to working with a predominantly hearing audience with little to no knowledge of Deaf culture, negotiated with the audience through a shared vocabulary created with story and gesture.

In both of these situations there is a certain "invisibility" of the interpreter that is considered appropriate with a seamless interpretation to English or ASL. This does not suggest, however, that the interpreter does not need to be prepared in both of these situations. An interpreter must be familiar with the play or story in advance and

39. Ben Reeves, "Communicating Without Words," review of *Peter Cook: Flying Words*, voice interpreted by Lindsey D. Snyder, Harbach Theatre, Galesburg, *The Knox Student*, January 28, 2009.

40. Kanta Kochlar-Lindgren, *Hearing Difference: The Third Ear in Experimental, Deaf, and Multicultural Theatre* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2006), 118.

have some idea of the topic, energy, and movement that will occur in the workshop or performance. In performance, the interpreter must not only think of the actors but take the audience into account, both physically (where in the space they are located) and contextually (a particular type of group, age, or knowledge base).

Both examples demonstrate a successful cross-cultural dialogue that happens between Deaf and Hearing, ASL and English, because of the structure and vocabulary of theatrical performance. Continuing with the embodied research of ASL, Gesture, and performance will shift the point of access in Shakespeare's text from predominantly aural rhetorical clues to embodied rhetoric for Deaf and Hearing theatre practitioners, interpreters, and audiences to discover.

There is no perfect interpretation of Shakespeare to ASL. In performance the interpretation relies on the actors to convey meaning that the interpreter must process and relate to the audience. Having historical and dramaturgical information available would vastly improve access to the text for translation and interpretation. Actors and other theatre practitioners will learn new information from the text using a methodology that rediscovers what was forgotten or lost. Practitioners, academics and interpreters working together to fully interpret Shakespeare's texts will expand the boundaries of the current research and, "[I]t is far more thrilling and emancipating to discover limits within which a given work allows legitimate interpretation."⁴¹

41. Bernard Beckerman, "Explorations in Shakespeare's Drama," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1978), 145.

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